

**ADULT USERS' PERCEPTIONS OF LIBRARY SERVICES PROVIDED  
BY NONGOMA PUBLIC LIBRARY, KWAZULU-NATAL**

**By**

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## Declaration

I, Miss Nombuso Portia Buthelezi declare that:

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

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to:

My late father Mr A.B. Buthelezi

My mother Mrs N.G Buthelezi

My grandmother Mrs N Zulu

My aunts Ms K.M Zulu and Mrs N.R Mngomezulu

My son Asemukele

My sisters Nokubongwa, Kwandile and Sinakhokonke

My brothers Sizwe, Ndlelenhle and Mvuzomuhle

My friends Nokulunga Ngobese, Nozipho Maphanga and Girly Mdluli

My late friend Phindile Mthlane

And all my family members and friends.

For their unconditional love, support, encouragement and understanding throughout my journey to the completion of this thesis.

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## **Abstract**

The study investigated adult users' perceptions of the library services provided by the Nongoma Public Library (NPL) in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). It examined the quality of service provided by the library to its adult library users, by determining their expectations and perceptions of the services provided and whether there were any gaps between users' expectations and perceptions. It also investigated users' level of satisfaction with the quality of services rendered. Since its inception in 1996 and despite its importance, no assessment of the NPL had been conducted from the perspective of its users. This study intended to fill this gap and it is assumed that the findings will form a baseline and framework for future services provided by the library.

Using convenience sampling a sample of 262 adults was selected from the 819 registered adult library users. One hundred and thirteen (113) users completed the questionnaire giving a response rate of 43.1% which was considered acceptable for purposes of analysis and reporting. The study adopted a quantitative approach using the survey design. The LibQUAL+™ survey instrument which was used to collect data was modified and adapted for use in a public library. In line with the quantitative approach, the majority of the questions asked were closed. The results from the questionnaire survey were analysed using SPSS to determine the frequency of responses and were presented in the form of tables and figures.

The results of the survey support the usefulness of the LibQUAL+™ instrument used in the study and its importance in the context of public library services. The findings indicate that in most instances, expectations exceeded perceptions regarding the quality of the services provided by the library. However, the gaps between the two were, for the most part, not significant and the extent of the gap depended on the individual services. Significant gaps were found in the categories "Library facility" and "Access to information". Certain aspects of the category "Staff services" were found to be of concern. Findings revealed that the majority of adult users ranked the overall quality of services as good and that the library is, to a large extent, excelling in service provision. Based on the findings, recommendations were made to address the problems identified in the study. The results will be used for service improvements and to make informed decisions concerning the quality of services that are offered at the NPL. The thesis concluded with suggestions for further research.

The findings of the survey that indicated that although the adult library users were satisfied with library services they received from Nongoma Public Library but there was a room for improvement. The respondents mentioned the most problematic services as the lack of adequate computers and access to Internet. The respondents further reported that there were gaps in sections involving Access to Information, Access to Electronic Resources, Library Staff and the Library facility. The study recommends that service quality be improved, in a way that the library would satisfy its adult user.

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## **List of abbreviations**

ARL – Association for Research Libraries  
BSC – Balanced Scorecard  
DAC – Department of Arts and Culture  
EFQM – European Foundation for Quality Management  
ICT – Information and Communication Technology  
IFLA – International Federation of Library Associations  
KZN – KwaZulu-Natal  
NM – Nongoma Municipality  
NPL – Nongoma Public Library  
IDP – Integrated Development Plan  
HIV – Human Immunodeficiency Virus  
ISO – International Organisation for Standardisation  
KPMG – Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler  
LibQUAL+TM – Library Quality  
LIS – Library and Information Services  
MUT-NSL – Mangosuthu University of Technology Natural Sciences Library  
SACLIS – South African Community Library and Information Services  
SERVQUAL – Service Quality  
SPSS – Statistical Package for the Social Sciences  
TQM – Total Quality Management  
UKZN – University of KwaZulu-Natal  
UNESCO – United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation  
ZDM – Zululand District Municipality

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# **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

## **1.0 Introduction and background of the study**

Providing services that satisfy the needs of customers is paramount in any business, including the public library. Public libraries must provide quality services to their users; the services that they provide must talk to the needs of the users. People use public libraries for different reasons and, ideally, all library-related needs must be catered for. Libraries are moving away from the notion that views them as the building that keeps books for lending purposes. They are being viewed as information centres to which users turn in order to quench their information thirst. Paul (2014) posits that public libraries are not just the place where books are stored and shared but that they play a crucial role in the communities where they are situated. A public library is also a public space and people who work in it possess special knowledge, skills and abilities. First and foremost, the public library is based on the idea of sharing and free access to culture, information and knowledge. In these changing times characterised by ever-increasing access to information via the Internet, public libraries are faced with challenges to redefine and to re-establish themselves. Naidu (2009) argues that one of the greatest challenges for libraries today is to re-establish themselves as the first and foremost gateway to which users are turning to for assistance in navigating their way through the vast amount of information that is available in a variety of formats.

Customers as the consumers of services are the ones who can give a clear indication of whether they are satisfied with the services or not. For a business to perform well in the market it has to measure its success, in other words, it has to gauge whether the services it is providing to its customers satisfy those customers or not. According to Ziethaml, Parasuman and Berry (1990), the only criteria that count in evaluating service quality are defined by customers. Ziethaml, Parasuman and Berry (1990) further stress that it is only the customers who judge quality and that all other judgements are essentially irrelevant. To measure their performance libraries, in the past, would focus on the size of their collections, the number of books circulated, the number of staff employed and the number of people who joined the library as members. However, according to Bhim (2010), these measures of the performance of libraries do not really reflect whether the users are satisfied or not with the services they are receiving. Such measurements do not assess whether users' perceptions and expectations are being met or not. Nor do they necessarily address users' information needs and are not sufficient to prove why

libraries are still relevant and important in communities. Essentially, the quantitative measures do not address the question of whether the library provides the services which “talk” to the needs of its users or not. Majid, Anwar and Eisenschitz (2001) contend that putting emphasis on quantitative measures in the library has to be changed since the success or effectiveness of a library can only be measured through user satisfaction. Library users are the ones that provide direction as to whether the library is providing the services that cater for their needs or not and, therefore, they should be consulted in order for the library to be sure if it is performing according to its users’ expectations and perceptions. Naidu (2009) states that it is the library user who is the focus of the evaluation and it is his or her opinions that provide the measure of user satisfaction.

Sahu (2007) states that quality is a basic philosophy and a requirement of the library profession and all libraries are striving to deliver the highest quality of services. Libraries are expected to deliver the state-of-art services to their users and to maintain their relevance in these (aforementioned) changing times. Tennant et al (2006) points out that libraries are no longer the sole gateway to information and knowledge they once were. Information has become easily and “freely” available on the Internet, so the role of libraries has, arguably, been lessened in communities. Bhim (2010) further contends that libraries now, more than ever, libraries are having to justify their value in these times of budgetary pressures, dwindling public funds and competition from other public institutions. And, one might add, the Internet. In order to ensure that they are still relevant in these times, libraries are turning their focus towards their users in terms of determining their success.

Nitecki (1997) argues that the primary focus of a library is “service”. According to Kachoka (2010), quality service is one which meets (and one might add, exceeds) the perceptions and expectations of the customers. Jayasundara, Ngulube and Minishi-Majanja (2009) state that gauging customer satisfaction through service quality studies has become one of the most popular marketing strategies. Furthermore, measuring the service quality provided by public libraries could be regarded as an important tool to measure the relevance of public libraries in the community. Kachoka (2010) quoted Quinn (1997) who argued that measuring quality is important as policymakers are questioning the role of libraries.

Given the above, while it is apparent that there has been a shift away from the traditional quantitative indicators of the quality of library services to an emphasis being placed on the

perspectives of the users, it is important to bear in mind that libraries are not only user-driven operations – there needs to be an internal focus as well. This means that factors such as collection size, circulation statistics and the number of users entering the library are still being taken into consideration when measuring the success of the library. Including these factors will help ensure that a multi-dimensional assessment of quality is achieved (Bhim 2010).

The focus of this study was on the perspectives of the users in terms of measuring performance and can be seen as part of the systematic effort needed to help libraries to “listen to their users” (Naidu 2009). In order to listen to their users (adopting what Naidu (2009) refers to as a “user-centred” approach), libraries should assess users’ opinions on services delivered. This is usually done by surveys handed out or mailed to a random sample of users or by a web-based survey on the library’s website (Powell and Boekhorst 2007). User surveys can also ask for different levels of experience with library services, for example:

- The experience and satisfaction with the last library visit or last use of the library
- The long-time experience and satisfaction with all or individual library services
- The experience and satisfaction compared with the expected quality level (Powell and Boekhorst 2007).

This study was an attempt to assess the quality of services provided by the Nongoma Public Library (NPL) from the adult users’ point of view. (Adult users in this study were defined as being 18 years and older and who were registered members of the NPL.) Like many public libraries, the NPL, since its inception in 1996, has not evaluated the quality of the services it provides to its users from their (the users’) perspective. It was the intention of the study to fill this gap.

In this introductory chapter, the background of the study is given. This comprises a brief outline and discussion of the important concepts used in the study including, amongst others, performance, service, quality and users’ perceptions and expectations. The context of the study is then given in which the Municipality of Nongoma is described. This is followed by the rationale of the study, the study problem, its objectives and the key questions asked. The theoretical framework is described and the definitions of relevant terms given. The chapter ends with an outline of the remainder of the study and a summary



## **1.1 Context of the study**

Nongoma is situated in the northern part of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal. According to the Nongoma Integrated Development Plan (IDP 2017/2018), Nongoma is one of the five local municipalities that make up the Zululand District and is located in the east of the Zululand District Municipality (ZDM). The Nongoma Municipality (NM) covers an area of approximately 2,184 km<sup>2</sup> and is the second largest in terms of area in the ZDM. Nongoma is surrounded by the towns of Ulundi, Pongola, Vryheid and Hlabisa. Nongoma is mostly rural and is the most populated municipality in Zululand according to KZN Top Business. It is the home district of the Zulu Monarch and lies in the heartland of the great Zulu culture. It is the traditional throne of the Zulu Royal Family and is a region rich with traditional cultural history, the practice of ancient customs and the traditional way of social life. According to the IDP (2017/2018), Nongoma has three tribal authorities, namely Mandlakazi, Usuthu and Matheni Traditional Councils and there are 363 settlements, only one of which (Nongoma) has some urban characteristics whilst 98.34% of the population lives in rural areas. Nongoma is popularly known as the seat of the Zulu monarch because it is ruled by King Goodwill Zwelithini Zulu. Izinduna, who are chosen by the king or chief, act as mediators between the king, the community and ward councillors.

Nongoma is made up of 21 municipal wards, with 42 councillors. The ward councillor is elected by the community in local government elections and is the accountable person for a ward. Ward councillors are thus responsible for their ward and adhere to the Councillor's Code of Conduct. They are the intermediary between the community and council, liaising between the two. They also call community meetings to address issues raised by residents. If a ward councillor is removed or leaves for any reason, a by-election is held to replace them. The public in that ward then vote for a replacement ward councillor and their affiliated party. Approximately 211,893 people reside in Nongoma (StatsSA 2011). According to the Census (2011), there are more females than males (56: 44) within the municipal area and some 60.5% of households in 2011 were headed by women. This can be as a result of out-migration of people particularly men to Empangeni/Richards Bay, Durban and mining areas in Gauteng and elsewhere.

Nongoma is a poverty-stricken community because there are few, if any, job opportunities in the area. According to the Census (2011), the lowest household income levels are around the town of Nongoma and in the northern parts of the municipality. Whilst it would appear that

there has been a reduction in the unemployment rate from 71.1% in 2001 to 49.3% in 2011, this does not reflect those persons who are employable but are discouraged in their seeking for work. Some 52% of all households within the Nongoma Municipal Area earned less than R1,600 per month in 2011. This means that they qualify as indigents. While the rate of unemployment in Nongoma has decreased over the years, it is still very high and remains unsatisfactory. The income levels are low with about 75% of households earning below R38 200 per annum, that is, about R3 000 per month.

The illiteracy level in Nongoma is very high. The IDP (2012) states that the education levels in Nongoma are poor with 36.2% of the population being functionally illiterate and 32.8% having no schooling at all. These levels of education impact drastically on the type of employment opportunities that can be created within the municipality. The average HIV prevalence rate in the municipality between 1996 and 2007 was estimated at 13.57% of the population, although this is likely to be an under-estimate. In Nongoma town itself, the average HIV prevalence rate was estimated to be 8.20% according to Nongoma Draft IDP 2017/2018.

As noted, there are high levels of unemployment in Nongoma which means that poverty is indeed one of the major challenges being experienced. While Nongoma has the second-highest population of all Zululand municipalities, it only contributes 13.6 % to the District's economic output. The Nongoma economy is dependent on two sectors: government services and retail/commercial with these sectors contributing close to 75% of the GDP of the municipality. Considering that the mining sector contributes 10% this suggests that the contributions of the agricultural and manufacturing sectors specifically are negligible (IDP 2012).

Figure 1.1 below depicts a map of Nongoma.

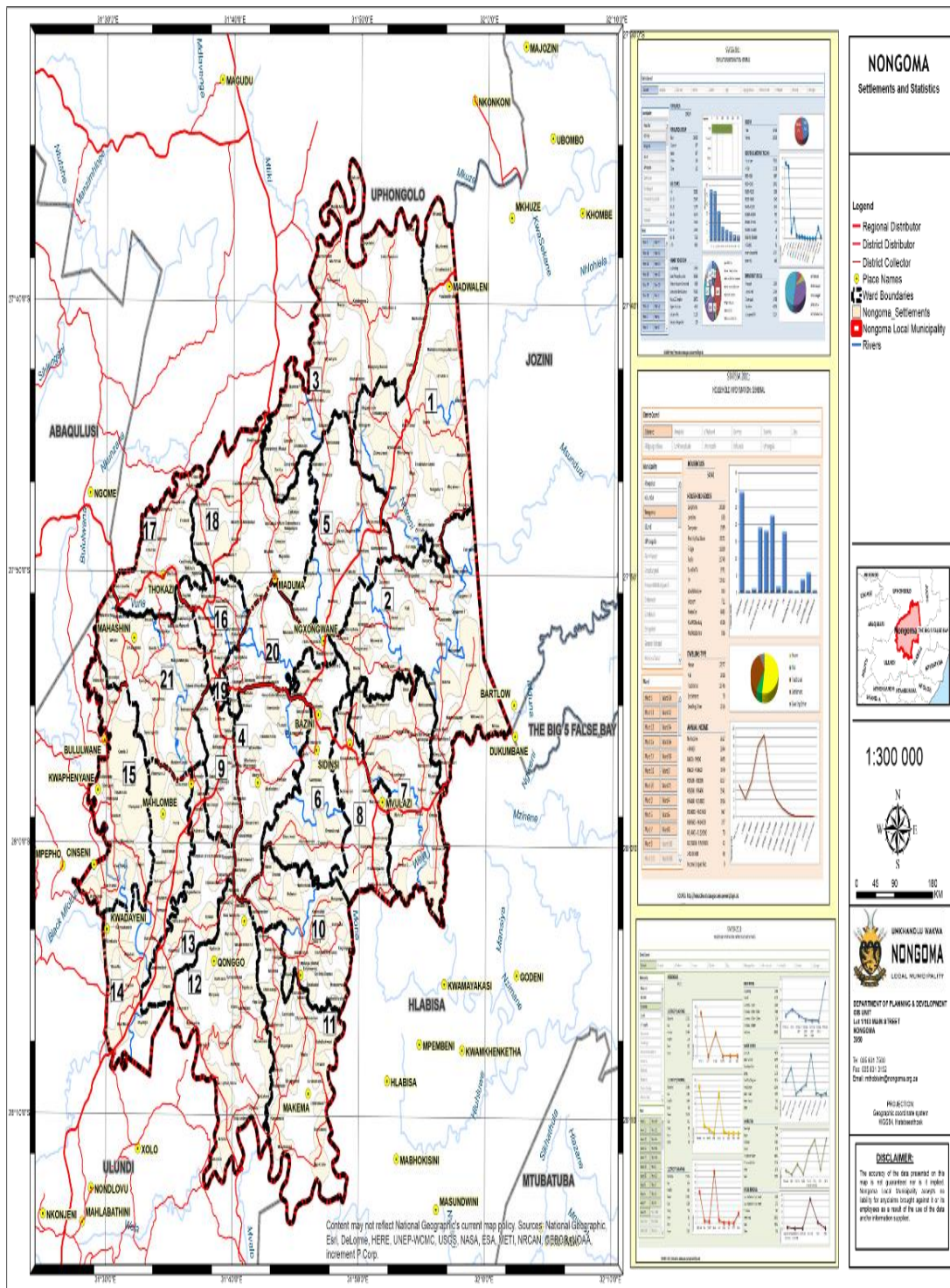


Figure 1.1: Map of Nongoma (Media monitoring Africa 2018)

### 1.3 Rationale of the study

The purpose of the study was to determine the adult users' perceptions of services provided by the NPL. As noted in the background to the study, no assessment has been done of the library from the perspective of its users since its inception. It was assumed that the findings of this

study would provide a baseline and framework for the future services provided by the library. NPL is the only library within Nongoma but it really does not reach the whole of its user base because other communities are located far away from town and travelling to town is costly. Hypothetically, the library is centrally located but few people are aware of and use this important institution. According to circulation statistics found on the library database, few sources are being circulated in the library (KZN-SLIMS 2018). It is thus under-utilised despite it being the sole library in Nongoma. Contributing factors (apart from distance in some instances) might be the level of illiteracy, poverty and the library not being properly marketed. A further factor could be the inadequacy of the services provided and it is with this factor that the study, as outlined above, was concerned. By assessing the services provided by the library from the perspective of the users, it was anticipated that the study would address this need and assist the library management and staff to identify and respond to areas of failure and, by so doing, improve service delivery.

Filiz (2007) has pointed out that the survival of the library depends on the benefit it brings to the users. Therefore, the library should provide services that “talk” to its users. It was expected that the study would show both the weakness of the library (where it needs to improve) and also its strengths (areas where the library can further excel). Thus, the findings of the study would go some way toward helping the library management and staff to rectify the problems and build on the strengths in terms of service delivery to the users. Importantly, the results of the study could be used as a tool to influence the municipality management to improve and develop policies and instruments that would assist the library to deliver quality services as expected by the adult library users.

#### **1.4 Research problem**

The NPL has the duty to provide for the informational, educational and recreational needs of the Nongoma community. It is therefore important to determine whether the library is fulfilling its duty and, by so doing, meeting its aims and objectives. As has been noted above, no user based survey has been done regarding the performance of the library and library staff are, as a consequence, unaware of the extent to which the library is meeting users’ needs through the provision of services or how users perceive the quality of those services. It is this problem that the study attempted to address. Also as outlined in the background to the study, it is evident that assessing library performance from the perspective of the users of the library is now, understandably, the preferred approach and this was the approach adopted by the study.

There is much available literature providing reasons for service quality assessments in libraries (Sahu 2006, Moon 2007, Willer 2001 and Simba 2002). If libraries want to become providers of service excellence, such assessments are critical and need to be done as soon as possible. For the NPL to excel, grow and develop to its full potential, it needs to provide excellent services and resources for its current and prospective users and such assessment should, ideally, be a continuous activity during which users are given an opportunity to express their views with regards to the services of the library. Naidu (2009) states that a library which offers a world-class service is excelling in satisfying the operational and strategic goals of the institution.

Quantitative measures such as the size of the library's collection, the number of members and the number of books circulated, while useful, do little in terms of measuring the quality of services provided nor the library's relevance to the community – whether the community is benefiting from the services provided or not. As Quinn (1997) point out, the means by which the library can provide evidence of its contribution to the community is by delivering excellent user services. By conducting a user-centred survey the study would give a clearer understanding of users' perceptions of the library and provide the necessary evidence of the quality of services provided to the users.

### **1.5 Objectives of the study**

The broad objective of the study was to determine whether the services provided by the NPL met the needs of its adult library users. The more specific objectives were to:

- Determine users' expectations of the services provided by the NPL.
- Determine users' perceptions of the services provided by the library.
- Determine the gaps between users' expectations and perceptions.
- Explore how the library can meet the needs of its users.

### **1.6 Key questions**

- What are the users' expectations of the services provided by the NPL?
- What are the users' perceptions of the services provided by the library?
- What are the gaps between users' expectations and perceptions?
- What does the library need to do to meet the needs of its users?

Recommendations based on the findings to these questions were made.

## **1.7 Theoretical framework**

According to Parasuraman, Ziethaml and Berry 1988; Nitecki 1996; Association for Research Libraries (ARL) 2000), there have been number of theories of service quality evaluation and user perceptions have been used in the past. Methods used to assess service quality include Service Quality (SERVQUAL), Service Performance Model (SERVPEF), European Foundation for Quality Measurement (EFQM), Total Quality Management (TQM), LibQUAL+TM and Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQM). All these methods are based on theoretical frameworks (Martensen and Gronhold 2003).

The service quality method (SERVQUAL) has been used to measure the level of satisfaction of customers in the marketing environment – customers are given an opportunity to evaluate whether they are satisfied or not with the product and services they receive. The SERVQUAL method was developed by Parasuraman, Ziethaml and Berry in 1988 to assess user perceptions of service quality in retail organisations. This model was mostly used in businesses where companies were losing market share to competitors (Quinn 1997). According to Quinn (1997), the SERVQUAL method (also referred to as model) is a comprehensive measurement because it measures both customer perceptions and expectations and it has been extensively used across a wide variety of service settings to understand service quality from the customer's point of view.

This study adopted a modified SERVQUAL model, namely, LibQUAL+TM which has been used in the library and information environment to determine user perceptions and expectations of services. Quinn (1997) states that in a library context, the model can be adapted to reference, access services and collection development. According to Marnane (2004), LibQUAL+TM provides a more reliable method in terms of measuring the gaps between user expectations and perceptions in the library context. The SERVQUAL model (from which the LibQUAL+TM is derived) is based on the idea of user-centred assessment and identifies five potential gaps between expectations and perceptions of service delivery (elaborated on below).

Numerous and extensive studies on service quality using LibQUAL+TM approach have been conducted in academic libraries both in South Africa (SA) and internationally. It has been less used in the public library context. Two public library-related studies have been reported on.

The first, using the SERVQUAL method assessed service quality at the Sungai Petani Public Library in Malaysia (Zakaria et al 2009). The second, using the LibQUAL+TM approach, was undertaken at the Bessie Head Library in Pietermaritzburg, in South Africa (Bhim 2010). The reason for the shortage of such studies in public libraries is unclear although it must be remembered that SERVQUAL and its derivative LibQUAL+TM were developed with the academic and research library in mind. This will be further discussed in Chapter 2.

As pointed to above, LibQUAL+TM is based on the Gap theory which constitutes the gaps or differences between the services that a customer expects to receive and what the customer actually receives. The gaps are summarised by Nitecki (1996) and are as follows:

**Gap 1:** The discrepancy between customer's expectations and management's perceptions of these expectations.

**Gap 2:** The discrepancy between management's perceptions of customer's expectations and service quality specifications.

**Gap 3:** The discrepancy between service quality specifications and actual service delivery.

**Gap 4:** The discrepancy between actual service delivery and what is communicated to customers about it.

**Gap 5:** The discrepancy between customers expected services and the perceived services delivered.

As stated earlier, LibQUAL+TM is an extension of SERVQUAL tool, and, as its name implies, LibQUAL+TM attempts to go beyond typical quantitative evaluations of library accomplishments to collect useful data about library services (Nicula and Laseter 2003). LibQUAL+TM has undergone several revisions in terms of dimensions and core items during its developmental period. In 2004 the instrument was modified and had 22 core items spanning across three dimensions. These were "effects of services", "information control" and the "library as a place." Currently, LibQUAL+TM uses the 2004 version which was adapted and used for this study.

LibQUAL+TM enables service providers to understand how users think about and evaluate libraries. It uses the framework of users' perceptions and expectations to improve libraries and is a protocol that is scalable and useful for local planning and decision making (Kyrillidou and Higgs 2001). The LibQUAL+TM model can be used to measure users' attitudes towards the

quality of services that a library renders and, like SERVQUAL, measures both users' expectations and perceptions and has been tested extensively across a wide variety of service settings (Bhim 2010).

Thus, in order to understand and assess the perceptions and expectations of adult library users of the services provided by the NPL, the LibQUAL+™ instrument based on the Gap theory (and more specifically Gap 5) was used in the study. In terms of Gap 5, the quality that a consumer perceives in a service is a function of the magnitude and direction of the gap between expected service and perceived service (Cook and Heath 2001). It must be noted that the instrument used was adapted for use in a public library setting because, as mentioned, the vast majority of the research using the SERVQUAL and LibQUAL+™ models has been undertaken in academic and research libraries.

The theoretical framework is further discussed in Chapter 2.

## **1.8 Definitions of relevant terms used in the study**

The following terms are defined for the purpose of this study:

### **1.8.1 Perception**

Perception is defined as the way one notices things, especially with the senses; the ability to understand the true nature of something; it is also referred to as an idea, a belief or an image one has as a result of how one sees or understands something (Hornsby 2010). For the purpose of this study “perception” was how the adult library users viewed (or perceived) the actual services provided by the NPL.

### **1.8.2 Expectation**

According to the *English dictionary & thesaurus* (2008) expectation is defined as believing or feeling that something is going to happen or be the case. It is also defined as the act or the state of expecting something to happen (anticipation). For the purpose of this study “expectation” was defined as what adult library users expected to receive from the NPL in terms of services.



### **1.8.3 Public library**

A public library is an organisation established, supported and funded by the community, either through the local, regional or national government. The public library provides access to knowledge, information, lifelong learning and works of the imagination through a range of resources and services. It is available on an equal basis to all members of the community regardless of age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic and employment status and educational attainment (Koontz and Gubbin 2010).

### **1.8.4 Library users**

A library user is the one who uses the public library serving the geographic community of which he or she is a part of (Evans 1969). Nwalo (2003) defined a user as anybody who visits the library with the purpose of exploiting its resources to satisfy his or her information need. Aina (2004) states that the term “user” includes all those who avail themselves of the services offered by a library. In terms of this study, “library user” referred to adults who were 18 years and older and who were registered members of the NPL.

### **1.8.5 Quality**

Stevenson (1997) referred to quality as “a measure of how good or bad something is.” In the context of this study, quality meant how good or bad the library services were (from the perspective of the users).

### **1.8.6 Service quality**

Service quality is defined in terms of reducing the gap between customer expectations and the actual service provided (Calvert and Herson, 1997). Parasuraman et al (2006) define service quality as the ability of the organisation to meet or exceed customer expectations. It is the difference between customer expectations of services and perceived services (Ziethaml 1990). Sahu (2007) states that in the context of the library, the concept of service quality can be defined as the “difference between users’ expectations and perception of services performance and the reality of the services”. According to Sahu (2007), service quality means being able to view the services from the customers’ (or users’) points of view and then meeting the customers’ expectations for services. Nitecki and Franklin (1999) define service quality in terms of

reducing the gap between customers' expectations for excellent service and their perceptions of the actual service delivered.

### **1.8.7 User satisfaction**

Dalton (1994) claimed that "user satisfaction" was a subjective output measure which reflects the quality dimension of the library service being provided. In this study "user satisfaction" meant that the users of the library were receiving a good quality service and the services rendered met their expectations.

### **1.9 Limitations of the study**

The study assessed only a sample of registered adult users of the library. Non-members frequenting the library were excluded. The ideal would have been to sample all library users but time limitations and the requirements for this study (a short dissertation) limited it to a sample of users only.

### **1.10 Structure of the remainder of the study**

The remainder of the study, by chapter, is as follows:

**Chapter 2** comprises the literature review. An overview of the NPL is provided. This is followed by a discussion of the role of public libraries in social inclusion, creating social capital and a democratic SA. The theoretical framework underpinning the study is further discussed and the chapter ends with a review of studies which have used the SERVQUAL and LibQUAL+TM models in both the academic and public library context.

**Chapter 3** describes the research methodology adopted in the study. This includes the research design, population and sampling, data collection instrument, forms of questions and the administration and distribution of the instrument. The issues of reliability and validity are raised, how the collected data were analysed is outlined, and the ethical considerations of the study are briefly discussed.

**Chapter 4** presents the results of the study. Findings are presented in the form of tables and figures and statistics given in the form of frequency counts.

**Chapter 5** discusses the research results in relation to the research questions and the literature reviewed.

**Chapter 6** is the final chapter. Here, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research are made.

### **1.11 Summary**

In this introductory chapter, various components of the study were introduced and discussed. The background and context of the study were provided. In the latter, an overview of Nongoma was given. This was followed by an outline of the research problem, objectives of the study, research questions and theoretical framework. Definitions of terms relevant to the study were given and the remainder of the study was outlined by chapter.

## **Chapter 2 – Literature review**

### **2.0 Introduction**

A literature review is a search for, and evaluation of, the available literature on one's chosen subject or topic area. "The review of the literature provides a classification and evaluation of what accredited scholars and researchers have written on a topic, organized according to a guiding concept such as a research objective or the problem the research wishes to address" (Taylor 2006). According to Naidu (2009), a literature review includes identifying potentially relevant sources, a thorough analysis of selected sources and the construction of an account integrating and explaining relevant sources.

In this chapter the concepts of social exclusion and social capital vis a vis the public library are discussed. Points concerning the public library in a democratic SA are then made. Issues raised in Chapter 1 are further discussed, namely, the concepts of service quality and user satisfaction. This is followed by an overview of the SERVQUAL model and the LibQUAL+™ instrument used in service quality assessments. A review of related studies on service quality in both public and academic libraries ends the chapter. To begin with, an overview of the Nongoma Public Library (NPL) is provided

### **2.1 Overview of Nongoma Public Library**

The NPL plays a role in its community both as a library and as an information centre. This library has a huge responsibility to provide services to the community given that the people of Nongoma do not have anywhere else to go to quench their knowledge and information thirst. Public libraries need to be positioned to provide effective information services to the socially excluded people in their communities and given the context of Nongoma (see Chapter 1) many residents could be described as socially excluded (social exclusion is discussed in some detail below). According to the Policy Guidance for Local Authorities in England (2009) the UK Government wants libraries to be at the very heart of the communities they serve, allowing everyone, irrespective of their age or social background, to have access to the widest possible range of information, knowledge and services. Undeniably, this would apply to libraries in South Africa (SA) including the NPL. Public libraries in SA do play a major role in supporting formal education and life-long learning for everyone. The facilities and services they provide need to be accessible at the times when people most want to use them, and the local community

needs to be involved in developing the range of services that their library provides. Robinson (2016) argued that public libraries are a unique, vital and valuable institution offering a non-commercial public space which is open to all. He further argued that at the same time, their value is systematically under-recognised, making them vulnerable to financial cuts. Public libraries are working in deeply engaging ways with their communities responding to user need and feedback, delivering on local authority agendas and connecting users to information and facilitating social connection. As Robinson (2016) points out, public libraries are not for one type of person and what one's background and race are do not matter – they are the one free community space open to all. Public libraries are necessary, if not sufficient, prerequisites for a democratic knowledge-based society.

The NPL has a duty to promote and encourage literacy and information awareness to its community by ensuring that information is always and readily available. Furthermore, it has the role of disseminating knowledge in all fields as well as serving as a centre for recreational reading and fostering the love of reading to both the young and old of Nongoma. In order to play these various roles, the library has developed to cater to the needs of the community. The sections within the NPL are as follows:

### **2.1.1 Computer section**

The computer section was made possible by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Arts and Culture (KZN-DAC) which donated computers to the NPL in 2010. This section provides computer training for both the community and staff alike. It has five computers and it is under the guidance of a computer library assistant who provides assistance to users. The NPL is committed to providing free access to the Internet to its users. The Internet is the gateway to a vast and expanding network of educational, recreational and commercial information. This section is one of the busiest in the library and people are utilising it for different purposes including searching the Internet for work opportunities and information for school projects and assignments. As it has been mentioned above, the NPL is the only library and information resource freely available in the community and it is perhaps not surprising the extent to which this section is used.

### **2.1.2 Lending section**

This section provides lending services to all registered library users both young and old. The Lending section has a collection of both fiction and non-fiction, audio-visuals (CDs and DVDs), magazines and local newspapers. Registered library users are allowed to take out materials using their library cards and they can renew borrowed material physically in the library or telephonically. A person is solely responsible for items taken out on his or her library card. Registered users may take up to seven items (that is, books, audio-visual materials and magazines) for two weeks. Pensioners and staff are allowed to borrow up to 10 library items for a period of three weeks. The lending section also offers a book reserve service which allows library users to place on reserve both fiction and non-fiction titles. Library users are notified telephonically when the book is available for collection and books must be collected within three days. If the book is not collected within the stipulated time, it is put back on the shelf ready to be circulated.

### **2.1.3 Reference section**

The Reference section provides resources to assist children and adults with their school and university assignments and projects. In terms of the latter users, there are a number of users studying via distance learning through institutions such as UNISA, the University of the North-West (UNW) and the University of Pretoria (UP). These students do not have an opportunity to access their institution's libraries since they do their studies through distance learning and thus rely on the NPL for their study needs. Information is readily available because in this section users are not allowed to borrow any materials for outside use – materials in this section can only be used within the library. Traditional material such as books suitable for reference purposes are supplemented by the other collection formats including files of newspaper and magazine clippings on a variety of common contemporary and historical topics, study guides and past examination papers for grade twelve.

### **2.1.4 Municipal governance**

The NPL is under the administration of the Nongoma Local Municipality (NLM) (Social Services). The KZN-DAC provides training for staff and financial support in the form of grants that sustain the library. The library also enjoys financial support from the NLM. The KZN-

DAC is also responsible for the collection development process in the library; it does the purchasing of books and other library material like computers and library furniture.

### **2.1.5 Library staff**

Nongoma Public Library consists of then (10) staff members of both professional and non-professionals. The library management consists of a Librarian, Senior Library Assistant, three (3) Library Assistants, one (1) Cyber-cadet (Computer Library Assistant) and four (4) general workers. Librarian is the only professional member in the library responsible for the whole functioning of the library, she acts as the “library manager”, Senior Library Assistant is responsible for the day-to-day running of the library and also supervise the 3 Library Assistants which provides the basic service of the library like working on the issue desks liaising directly with the library users and shelving of library material for users’ easy to library materials while Cyber-cadet is responsible for computer section in the library, he provides basic computer training to the public, responsible for the time allocation to computer users and lastly the 4 general workers are responsible for cleaning the library and the yard around the library.

Having provided some background detail on the NPL this chapter now turns to two contemporary challenges faced by public libraries and these are the library’s role in combatting social exclusion and promoting social capital.

## **2.2 Social exclusion**

One of the challenges faced by public libraries is the striving for relevance in a democratic SA. Public libraries in SA are not seen as important by decision-makers more especially those within municipalities according to <https://static.pmg.org.za/docs/2005/050831funding.htm> there is no policy or practice in place to govern the libraries within certain municipalities. Public libraries are often neglected in municipalities even though they play a crucial role in these communities. As noted above, they provide information and resources to communities which do not otherwise have access to such resources. To confront this perception of libraries two concepts have been explored in the 25 years since democracy to provide justification for the importance and the relevance of public libraries. These concepts are social exclusion and social capital. According to Muddiman et al (2000), social exclusion focuses on the socially excluded – who they are, where they live, what their needs are. Stilwell (2014) associated this

concept with the notion that everybody has the right to be completely included in society. Public libraries have to play a role in addressing the challenges faced by the public by being a place of refuge to which people can turn for their information resources needs. Stilwell (2006) states that public libraries can play a vital role in decreasing social exclusion by fostering social inclusion and assisting in bridging the information gap between those who can and those who are unable to access information resources.

### **2.2.1 What is social exclusion?**

The term social exclusion focuses on those who are socially excluded. Arguably, there is a consensus that social exclusion can be defined and explained in two ways. Social exclusion, according to Peace (1999), is a concept that relates to the notions of poverty, hardship, deprivation and marginalisation. Narrowly, social exclusion is used as a synonym for income poverty and refers to either those people who are not attached to the paid labour market (that is, unemployed) or to those people in low-earning employment. Peace (2001) further stated that social exclusion is a contested term – not only is it used to refer to a wide range of phenomena and processes related to poverty, deprivation and hardship, but it is also used in relation to a wide range of categories of excluded people and places of exclusion. The broader definition of the term social exclusion goes deeper than poverty, income inequality, deprivation or lack of employment. It also involves a lack of resources and/or denial of social rights (Bhim 2010). The process of exclusion often violates people's rights because they are, in most of the cases, excluded from their rights. Peace (1999) argues that the process of exclusion often results in multiple deprivations. Igiomoh and Ogunwemimo (2013) state that social exclusion occurs when people or places suffer, amongst other conditions, unemployment, discrimination, lack of skills, inadequate housing and poor health.

The definition of social exclusion, according to Durrani (1999), cannot be static as the process of social exclusion is a dynamic one, changing over time and space and affecting different groups in different ways. People are socially excluded in various ways in the community: some are excluded because they are illiterate or unemployed, while others are excluded due to their disabilities and so forth. Castells (2006) posits that social exclusion is a process, not a condition. Thus, its boundaries shift and who is included and excluded may vary over time depending on education, social prejudices, business practices and public policies (Stilwell 2006). Muddiman (1999) examined how disadvantaged groups, communities and individuals use and perceive the public library. He found that the public library has a crucial role to play



in engaging all excluded groups into the community, as it has the advantage of being local and having a vast number of users. Muddiman (1999), however, stated that there are limits to the libraries' perceived social roles and its aspirant minority of working-class people who particularly use and value the library.

### **2.2.2 Public libraries addressing social exclusion**

Public libraries are expected to be the agent in addressing the gaps in communities by allowing everyone to benefit from their services. Kawasaki (2005) states that in the United States of America and Britain, public libraries play an important role in closing the distance between the privileged and the underprivileged by providing access to information and knowledge. Train, Dalton and Elkin (2000) observed that the public library in the United Kingdom (UK) had striven to “confront the challenges of social deprivation and disadvantage with excluded communities” and argued that its services should be equally available to all. Muddiman (1999) notes that while public library services in the UK are often justified through appeal to the idea that they cater for all classes and sectors of society, he is critical of the extent to which they have achieved inclusion. Still in the UK, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (1999) stated that public libraries are a focal point for the provision of information services in the community. As such they have an important role to play in helping to combat social exclusion and promote lifelong learning. In this regard, Lockyer-Benzie (2004) states that the public library has the responsibility “To promote the involvement in culture and leisure activities of those at risk of social disadvantage or marginalisation, particularly by virtue of the area they live in; their disability or age, racial or ethnic origin. To improve the quality of people’s lives by these means.” NPL strives to be inclusive by being open to people from all walks of life. It does not discriminate people based on their social standard or level of education. It provides the resources that would be regarded as scarce to its community i.e. access to computer, access to Internet, books and so forth.

Stilwell (2006) argues that libraries combat social exclusion by helping bridge the gap between those who can afford access to information and those who cannot. Libraries in general and all information workers could play a crucial role in fostering social inclusion in communities. Stilwell (2006) further argues that all libraries and information workers and not only public libraries are urged to tackle social exclusion by actively adopting policies that place an ongoing commitment to social inclusivity within their working culture. Libraries, especially public libraries, could play a role in being the one-stop for information for all, regardless of one’s

background or status. In making the case for libraries as one of the best-placed organisations within the cultural sector to bring about the necessary changes to address social exclusion at the community level, social inclusion as policy needs to be mainstreamed within all library and information services. Stilwell (2006) suggests that libraries must examine the extent to which their services include all parts of society and South African libraries face great challenges in terms of realigning themselves in the new democracy. Fourie (2007) states that libraries should address all primary needs that can be linked to information needs and access to information. She further states that libraries should not be superficially “open to all”. In trying to understand the full scope of earnestness to ensure social inclusion, Fourie (2007) argues that there is a need to consider the effect social exclusion may have on people’s quality of life, the decisions they may take and the opportunities they are missing if they are excluded from library services. Ultimately, without access to information and without skills in accessing and using information, difficulties will arise in gaining an education, finding jobs and using government and health services.

There is a need to determine why social exclusion exists within communities. Fourie (2007) states that the need to determine what distinguishes those who are “included” in the library services and identifying what prevents others from using such services (such as a lack of experience in using a library, illiteracy and lack of resources in their mother tongue) should be regarded as a priority. Collecting empirical evidence on the information needs and behaviour of a specific group will provide a basis for targeting that group for inclusion.

The NPL is an information centre for everyone who resides within the Nongoma area and provides its services for free. All the people of Nongoma have the right to access the library resources and to utilise the resources without any limitations or restrictions. It is the gateway to information for all the people of Nongoma regardless of their financial status and level of education. Muddiman (1999) posited that public library services in the UK were often justified through an appeal to the idea that they cater equally for all classes and sectors of society. Like the UK, the NPL caters for the classes within Nongoma whether educated or not, rich or not and disabled or not – they all have equal access to the library and its resources. It strives to bridge the gap between the people of Nongoma by allowing people to have equal access to information and resources.

### **2.2.3 Public libraries and social capital**

The idea that public libraries can bring the community together and have a social impact through the provision of resources and space is not new. Historically, the purpose of public libraries was to safeguard democracy, divert behaviour from socially destructive activities and expose the population to literature and acceptable recreation (Hillenbrand 2005). Hillebrand (2005) further states that the objectives of the public library were directly dependent upon the objectives of society itself. Public libraries can contribute to the creation of social capital in the communities in which they are located by being a place where people can meet to socialise. According to June (2000), social capital is accumulated as a by-product of those interactions which contribute to a community or group sensing that their access to an institution, such as a library, enhances their functioning within the wider society. Public libraries offer open space for all and also provide a space for diverse people to meet and interact. Bhim (2010) states that public libraries have the potential for accommodating diversity in users, for contributing to the promotion of trusting relationships between diverse people and as a result of this contribute to creating trust between people in general. As June (2000) points out, public libraries have possibilities to contribute to the cohesive social fabric. Brown (2004) quotes Schuman who stated that librarians have a vital role to play in, and a social responsibility to work towards, an invention of the future which is free and just for all. Librarians are not only knowledgeable professionals, but social intermediaries curating a friendly and trusted social space in the library

According to Vårheim, Steinmo and Ide (2000) access to the public library space/infrastructure creates interactions that users think are socially helpful and thereby generates social trust. Public libraries are considered a safe place to be, different groups of people meet in the library for different reasons because public libraries are for all and nobody is excluded. The library thus can create trust between community groups. Cox et al. (2000) in their report maintained that the public library creates interaction, a sense of equity and trust, that is, it creates social capital. NPL provides both study room and group activities room , study room is used by those who wish to study individually whilst group activities room provide a space for group discussions and is also ideal for meetings and other community activities. The library provides a space for all.

### **2.3 Public libraries in a democratic South Africa**

South Africa achieved democracy in 1994 and this change brought its own challenges including access to information, an essential pillar in upholding a democracy (Raju and Raju 2010). Libraries are viewed as a pillar of democracy – democracy needs libraries to provide information and resources to communities which otherwise would not have access. As Schuman (1998) in Raju and Raju (2010) states, libraries are a building block of democracy, valued for their comprehensiveness, currency, openness and multiplicity of viewpoints with expert staff who inculcate the philosophy that all knowledge is valuable to the seeker, that is, an informed community constitutes the very foundation of a democracy. Raju and Raju (2010) further posit that the real concern in SA at present is the gap between the haves of any colour and the have-nots, and the public library has the capacity to bridge this gap through its contribution to the reduction of illiteracy, poverty and unemployment. The authors conclude that it is beyond debate that public libraries can play a critical role in propagating democracy and to do so it has to be an institution of democracy itself providing information for all, in a format that is most relevant and in a language that is most preferred. This would link to the concept of social exclusion in recognising that everyone has the right to information and that it (and the library which provides it) is an inclusive resource.

As an essential pillar of democracy, libraries and librarians provide opportunities for citizens to develop the skills needed to gain access to information of all kinds and to put the information to effective use in the generation of new knowledge for active participation in society, economic well-being and good health. Davids (2004) argues for a rethink of the role of public libraries and librarians within local government and of the place of public libraries within the socio-economic context. Davis (2004) further contends that the services of the public library should contribute to a positive quality of life.

According to IFLA (2001), the public library is the prime community access point designed to respond to a multitude of ever-changing information needs. The IFLA/UNESCO (2001) guidelines state that the purposes of the public library are to provide resources and services in a variety of media to meet the needs of individuals and groups for education, information and personal development including recreational and leisure. They have a big and important role to play in the development and maintenance of a democratic society by giving individuals access to a wide and varied range of knowledge, idea and opinions. Evans, Amodeo and Carter

(1999) state that the library has four distinctive roles in society which can be traced back in library history. These are:

- Libraries are responsible for acquiring a variety of information resources in various formats to suit the information needs of society.
- Libraries are responsible for the storage and preservation of their collected information in a central location that is easily accessible.
- Libraries must ensure that their collection is properly organised so that access and retrieval are not time-consuming.
- Libraries must provide assistance and guidance in locating the information needs of society's individuals, thereby providing educational benefits to users accessing library collections.

All public libraries face challenges at one time or another. In the case of public libraries in SA, a unique challenge has had to be dealt with: overcoming the inequalities in services and collections after the end of apartheid (Illsey 2006). According to Leach (1998), various challenges including inadequate funding, staff shortages and poor service delivery had imposed several constraints on South African public libraries. In a later article, Leach (2006) investigated the concept of alternative funding and indicated that "the decline in public funding is the major concern for public libraries in South African libraries and that no matter where public libraries are in the world, funding is and will be the challenge of the future".

According to the KPMG Status Quo Report (2007), a public library is the local gateway to knowledge, providing individuals and social groups with a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development. These roles are further expanded to include:

- Information, "the public library is the local centre of information, making all forms of knowledge and information readily available to its users".
- Personal development, "providing opportunities for personal creative development".
- Cultural development, "providing focus for cultural and artistic development in the community and helping to shape and support the cultural identity of the community".

- The social role of “providing public space where the public can meet, not only for reading but also for other social functions”.
- Being an agency for change, “the public library, in fulfilling its role, acts as an agency for social and personal development which results in positive social and economic benefits not only for individuals but to the community and country at large, thus contributing to the creation and maintenance of a well informed and democratic society and empowering people in the enrichment and development of their lives and that of the community they live in”.

The South African Community Library and Information Services (SACLIS) Bill and Schedule 5 of the South African Constitution, Act 108 of 1996 also makes provision for the promotion of library and information services. The objectives of the Bill place emphasis on the provision for national policy, principles, guidelines and minimum norms and standards for community libraries and for the provision of library and information services. Another objective is promoting effective coordination of strategic planning and budgeting processes for libraries by provinces and municipalities. The Bill also states that in respect of library evaluation and performance management mechanisms, library services and materials will be evaluated in compliance with national norms and standards (SACLIS Bill 2010).

The National Knowledge Commission (2008), a high-level advisory board in India, states that the ability of a nation to use and create knowledge capital determines its capacity to empower and enable its citizens by increasing human capabilities. It confirms the fact that libraries play a crucial role in providing widespread and inclusive access to information and knowledge. The Commission stated that a library has to play two distinct roles: it has to serve as a local centre of information and knowledge and be a local gateway to national and global knowledge. In order for this to be achieved, existing libraries must modernize their collection, services and facilities, become more pro-active and collaborate with other libraries and information agencies in order to develop a community-based information system.

Raseroka (1997) pointed out that librarians can make an important contribution towards an ethical and democratic information society by empowering citizens to take up and use the resources of the library as this empowerment is critical to the growth and development of the individual and the country as a whole. The public library, as an institution and a building, can provide spaces for people to share experiences which engender trust in the library itself, the staff and the broader society and play a vital role, as pointed out above, in addressing the

concepts of social exclusion and social capital. In a similar vein, Bhim (2010) argued that “As open places, public libraries have the potential for accommodating diversity in users, for contributing to promoting trusting relationships between diverse people and as a result of this learning process create trust towards people in general.”

In light of the above and as previously stressed, the NPL provides a free and open space for all the people of Nongoma. No one is discriminated against when accessing this important institution. The NPL can thus play an important role in promoting democracy, social capital and social inclusion by being an open place and also a meeting place for all regardless of one’s beliefs, traditions and social status.

In the following sections, the concepts of service quality and user satisfaction in public libraries are further discussed. In addition, some perspective regarding the LibQUAL+™ instrument is provided as it is the instrument that is used to assess service quality in a library (and the instrument adopted for this study).

## **2.4 Service quality**

The concept of quality is often studied in relation to different criteria and can be viewed from several perspectives. In the marketing literature, service quality is defined as the overall assessment of a service by the users of the service (AnIgor and Podbrežnik 2014). Service quality looks at how well a delivered service meets the client’s expectations and requirements. In the library environment, service quality can be defined as how well the library provides relevant information to the right user at the right time in the required manner. According to Hannes (n.d.), the primary focus of service quality is on meeting customers’ needs and requirements and how well the delivered service meets customers’ expectations. Quality is one of the basic requirements in public and other libraries and all libraries should be striving to deliver services of high quality. Quality in ISO 9000 is defined as the “degree to which a set of inherent characteristics fulfils requirement”. Grönroos (1984) states that a proper conceptualisation of service quality should be customer-based. Similarly, Bhim (2010), quoting Poll and te Boekhorst (2007), argues that in most definitions, quality is defined with regards to the customer or user and the most important issue is that quality becomes a meaningful concept only when it is indissolubly linked to the aim of total customer or user satisfaction.

Quality, in the library and information services (LIS) context, can be viewed from various and different angles. Brophy (2004) states that a set of quality features or criteria for the library has been adapted from the general management literature. Table 2.1 below shows the library quality criteria, their purpose, and examples of their applicability to library services.

**Table 2.1: The quality of libraries**

<b>Criteria of library quality</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Example</b>
Performance	A service meets its most basic purpose	Making key information and resources available on demand
Features	Secondary characteristics which add to the service but are beyond the essential core	Alerting services
Reliability	Consistency of the service's performance in use	No broken Weblinks
Conformance	The service meets agreed standard	Dublin Core
Durability	Sustainability of the service over a period	The ability of the library to keep hold of information
Currency	Up-to-datedness of information	Ability to provide current and new information
Serviceability	Level of help to users	Complaint services
Aesthetics	Visual attractiveness	Physical library, Website
Usability/Accessibility	Ease of access and use	Opening hours
Assurance/ Competence/Credibility	Good experience with staff's knowledgeability	Correct reference answers
Courtesy/Responsiveness Empathy	Accessibility, flexibility and friendliness of staff	Reference services
Communication	Clear explanation of services and options in jargon-free language	Website, signposting in the library
Speed	Quick delivery of services	Interlibrary lending
Variety of services offered	May clash with quality if resources are not sufficient	Comprehensive collection, reference services in walk-in, mail and chat form



	for maintaining quality in all services	
Perceived quality	The user's view of services	User satisfaction

Source: Poll and te Boekhorst (2007)

The quality attributes listed above are vital criteria to be used to measure service quality in the library. The users see library quality according to their experience with the services they get from their library. They will not care about the efficiency of the background process but rather for the effective delivery of services (Poll and te Boekhorst 2007).

Dominic et al (2010) argued that service quality is considered an essential strategy for success and survival in today's competitive environment. Quality and services have become the cornerstones of marketing strategy. The quality of services provided by the library is what keeps library users coming back to the library for more. Users seek to receive the highest quality of services from the library while the library seeks to provide top quality services to its users. Service quality in the public library should address needs, expectations and perceptions. Measuring users' expectations and perceptions is an important tool to be adopted in public libraries for the libraries to be sure that the services being provided are relevant (or not) to the adult library users they are serving. Service quality in the library can be measured by using the LibQUAL+™ instrument (Parasuraman 2004) and will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Hernon and Altman (1998) argue that every organisation's services have a quality dimension, ranging from wonderful to awful and service and quality cannot be disconnected. Quality is the means by which the service is delivered (or not) to the customer. Quality is looked at from the users' perceptions of service excellence and the quality of a service can only be measured from the users' perceptions of the service received.

The focus on public library relevance to the community they serve is, as discussed in the previous chapter, no longer based only on quantitative measures, for example, statistics relating to the number of people joining the library per month or the number of books issued, as these measures do not address users' perceptions or expectations. Nicholas (2001) argued that the use of traditional (quantitative) methods such as collection size and currency of the collection for evaluating the relevance of library services are no longer applicable and service quality has moved the focus to users who are the real consumers of the services provided. Also, as

previously emphasised, only customers can judge the quality and provide insight as to whether they are satisfied (or not) with the services received or whether the public library has met their need for information and resources. Researchers have thus drawn on marketing and other literature to focus attention on expectations and an alternative view of quality – one representing the user's or customer's perspective on the services used (Naidu 2009).

Service quality perception stems from how well the provider performs in relation to the customer's expectations about how the provider should perform (Bhim 2010). In that way, research tends to define service quality in terms of meeting or exceeding customer's expectations or more precisely, as the difference or gap between customer expectations and perceptions (Nitecki and Hernon 2000). To further explain the concept of quality Naidu (2009) quoted Osman, Goon and Aris (1998) whose study was undertaken among Malaysian university, public and special libraries. The term quality was defined from the library perspective and meant access to well-developed collections, prompt, efficient and courteous service, the fulfilment of users/clients' information needs, and a conducive environment and facilities. The reviewed literature emphasises the fact that a "good quality information service is about helping users to define and satisfy their information needs, building their confidence in using information retrieval systems, and making the whole activity of working with library staff a pleasurable experience" (Sahu 2007).

Given the above, it is evident that only the highest quality services can satisfy users' expectations and perceptions. The only way for the service provider to be sure about the quality of the services it provides is to assess the services from the client/customer's point of view. Service providers must engage with users and public libraries are not exceptions in this regard. The quality of services provided by public libraries can only be reviewed by engaging with users. It is evident from the reviewed literature that a good quality information service is about assisting users in their quest to define and satisfy their information needs, build their confidence in the use of information retrieval systems and inevitably make the whole experience of visiting the library and interacting with library staff a pleasurable experience (Naidu 2009).

Libraries today, in a context where information is easily available, need to be customer-centred to remain relevant to their users. Singh (2003) regarded the present time (in 2003) as being "the age of the information customer". Given the recent developments in mobile technology and widespread access to the Internet, this is even more "true" 16 years later. Chua, Mentol and Kua (2004) in Naidu (2009) state that as gate counts and loan statistics started to fall and

budgets were slashed (in some cases quite drastically), libraries began to seriously listen to what their users were saying about the services provided in order to find ways of remaining relevant and by so doing retain existing users as well as reach out to win new users.

Libraries are faced with many challenges including, as mentioned above, a reduction in funding. Despite this, they are expected to provide quality information and resources to their users. Libraries have a long tradition and history, and their existence has been justified on the basis of organising, providing access and preserving important historical and cultural information (Naidu 2009). Historically, libraries were the only information and resource centres to which users could turn to satisfy their information needs. Bhim (2010) states that libraries have evolved with different aspects of their operation being critical at different points in time. Easy access to information and the boom in information technologies posed and continue to pose a threat to libraries. These, among other developments, mean people can access information anywhere at any time without having to use a library. In recent years and with the development of networking technologies, the familiar and traditional roles of libraries have been called into question and greater calls for accountability have emerged (Bhim 2010). Libraries are having to justify their existence and, as a consequence, increasing emphasis is being placed on the services they provide and, crucially, whether these services are meeting the needs of their users.

Kyrillidou (2005) raised critical questions concerning the state and status of libraries when he asked: How is it known that the library is serving the needs of its users? That is, is it a highly valued resource? And is it making a meaningful contribution towards improving the quality of the services it offers? As previously stressed, information is now more easily accessible than ever before and libraries need to redefine their roles in communities. Kyrillidou (2005) argues that libraries need to be on the alert to serve the ever-changing needs of their users and strive to achieve greater levels of service excellence, relevance and impact. This is because it is the support of the users and their perspectives on how valuable libraries are in their lives that will generate the positive attitudes that are needed for continued and increased government funding and external grants.

A library like any service organisation must have motivated staff committed to the provision of excellent service and empowered to work directly with customers to deliver such service on a continuous basis. The focus is no longer based on collections and things that a library possesses; rather, the main core activity of a library is now centred on quality service provision

and improvement, and on building an ongoing relationship between users and the library services. Quinn (1997) mentioned that measuring service quality is important in libraries as policymakers are questioning the role of libraries and libraries are now having to justify their value in times of declining public funds, budgetary pressure and competition with other public institutions. Kyrillidou (2005) contends that the need for library service assessment is a universal concept and the call for accountability extends beyond national borders as libraries, in both their public and academic roles, are being asked to prove their value more than ever.

Customers always expect to get the right services in the right manner and at the right time. Like any other customers, library users expect services from the library to meet their expectations and perceptions. In order for libraries to improve, and to change services that do not meet the needs of their users they have to get feedback from the consumers of their services. Nitecki and Hernon (2000) state that customers who share information about their expectations offer an opportunity for that library or service provider to establish closer personal contact with them and this relationship can result in libraries providing, and customers receiving, better service. Quinn (1997) stated that libraries can assess customers' needs and expectations through user surveys in the form of questionnaires. They can also be used to investigate customers' attitudes towards libraries and the services they get from them. Nitecki (1997) suggested performing a needs analysis as a way of determining users' expectations. Findings can assist librarians in creating a customer service plan that will outline the goals and standards of customer service.

In today's global information marketplace libraries must be both competitive and serve as wise stewards of society's considerable investment in them and this includes effective service delivery (Cook and Heath 2003). The NPL, as outlined in Chapter 1, is under-utilised despite it being the sole library in the area. In order for it to be competitive and to be able to justify the investment (in terms of financial and human resources), it does need to increase both its usage by current users and its user base. To do so it must first ensure that quality services are being provided and the expectations of existing users are being met (and, ideally, exceeded). Also as outlined in the introductory chapter, no assessment of whether the users of the library are satisfied (or not) with the quality of the services provided have been done and it was this gap that the study attempted to fulfil. The concept of user satisfaction is now addressed below.

## 2.5 User satisfaction

Evaluating and guaranteeing customer or user satisfaction in the long-term is an integral part of quality management in libraries. Libraries should try by all means to deliver services that satisfy their users' perceptions and expectations. User satisfaction is defined by Dalton (1994) in Newane (2016) as "a subjective output measure which reflects the quality dimension of the library services". She goes on to explain that "user satisfaction is the difference between a user's expectation about an anticipated service and the actual performance of the service outputs as perceived by that user". Giving users the services they need is very important in any organisation. D'Elia and Walsh (1983) in Bhim (2010) argue that the construct of user satisfaction, that is, the user's self-reported degree of satisfaction with library services, is presumed to be a subjective measure of public library performance. Any organisation, including the library, needs to ensure that the services they provide meet both user needs and user expectations to the highest degree. It is very important for librarians to understand their user-base and to know what their users want and concentrate upon providing it, both in terms of service quality and user satisfaction (Cullen 2001).

Hernon and Altman (1998) state that satisfaction levels from a number of transactions or encounters that an individual experiences with a particular organisation fuse to form an impression of service quality for that person and the collective experiences of many persons create an organisation's reputation for service quality. D'Elia and Walsh (1983) argued that user satisfaction is considered to be an important construct in the development of models of user behaviour. They further stated that the construct, user satisfaction, has three uses. First, it is used to describe a library's level of performance. Second, it is used to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of specific services within a library and thirdly, it is assumed to be a behavioural response to current use which, in turn, affects the future behaviour of the user towards the library. It is evident from the above that there is a strong correlation between service quality and satisfaction of the library user – the higher the quality of service the library user receives, the higher the level of his or her satisfaction with the service (and vice versa). A third concept is also at play and that is the user's expectations. In this regard, Simba (2006) quoted Shi and Levy (2005) who pointed out that it is now "widely recognised that user perceptions of service quality, user expectations, and user satisfaction are essential elements of any service assessment activity". These new measures are also needed in public libraries in order to assess their relevance to, and their impact on, their users (De Jager 2002; Poll 2003).

It is to the measurement of service quality that the discussion now turns.

## **2.6 Measuring service quality**

In order to assess service quality, libraries have used various service quality assessment models. These include: the Balanced Scorecard Model (BSC), European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM Model), Library and Information Sector Improvement Model (LISM Model), SERVPERF Model, LibQUAL+TM instrument, SERVQUAL and Total Quality Management Model (TQM) (Kachoka 2010; Naidu 2009).

This study focused on the SERVQUAL model and LibQUAL+TM instrument both of which are discussed below:

### **2.6.1 SERVQUAL**

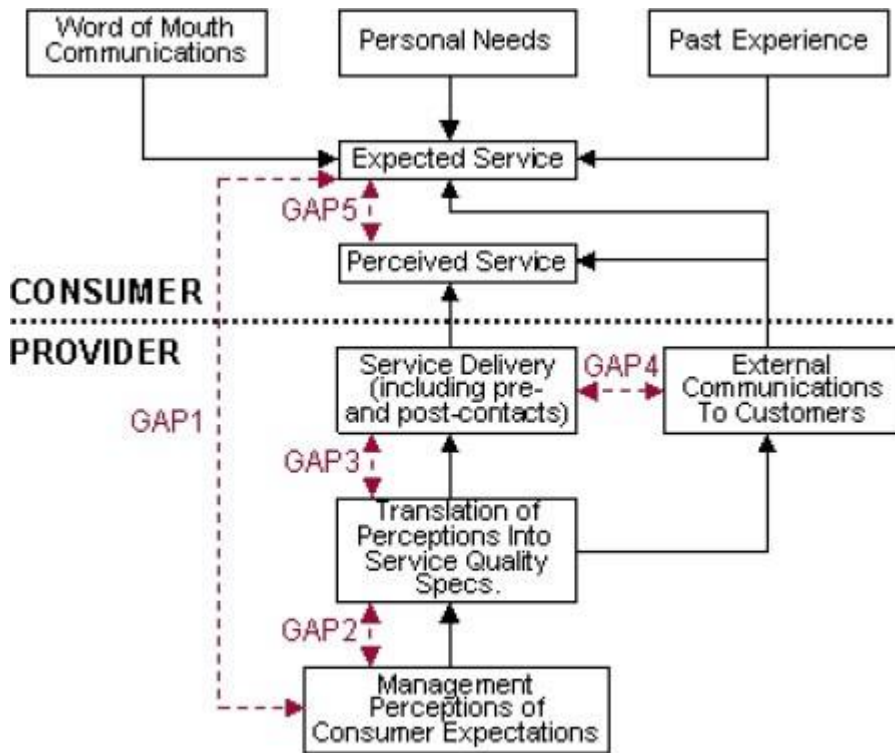
SERVQUAL model as the name says is based on the “concept of service quality which originated from the marketing discipline in the early 1980s” (Bhim 2010). The SERVQUAL model was developed as a means of assessing customer experiences of service quality in retail, industrial and commercial environments (Cook et al. 2003; Nitecki and Franklin 1999; Nitecki 1996). According to Zeithaml and Bitner (2003), the SERVQUAL model is a sound measure of service quality in that it can identify the aspects of service needing performance improvement, assess the extent to which each aspect of service needs improvement, and evaluate the impact of improvement efforts.

SERVQUAL is based on the idea of user-centred assessment. SERVQUAL listens to customers by allowing the customers in expressing themselves in saying whether they satisfied or dissatisfied with the product received. Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) believed that quality could be viewed as the gap between perceived service and expected service. The services is regarded as good when it satisfy its and bad it does not. Nagata, Satoh and Kyatomaki (2004), argue that the service is good if perceptions meet or exceed expectations and problematic if perceptions fall below expectations.

SERVQUAL is grounded in the Gap theory (or model) of Service Quality (outlined in Chapter 1) and is one of the most frequently used approaches to discuss and measure service quality (Sahu 2007). The Gap theory identifies gaps (listed in Chapter 1) in the service quality concept (Shahin 2005) and Gaps 1 and 5 are considered the important ones in terms of having a direct

relationship with customer (or user) satisfaction. Gap 5, in particular, is the focus in library research (Cullen 2001). Gap 5 is defined as “The discrepancy between customer expectations and their perceptions of the service delivered” (Shahin 2005). It is thus the basis of a customer-oriented definition of service, is the most user-focused and provides the conceptual basis for the SERVQUAL instrument (Nitecki 1996). The focus of this study was on Gap 5.

Figure 2 below depicts the Gap model theory of service quality.



**Figure 2.1: The gap model theory of service quality** (adapted from Ziethaml et al 1990)

According to Nagata et al. (2004), there are 10 dimensions which consumers use to evaluate service quality. These are tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, competence, courtesy, credibility, security, communication, access and understanding the customer. Through numerous qualitative studies by the researchers, these ten dimensions have been “polished” to a set of five dimensions which have been consistently ranked by customers to be most important for service quality, regardless of the service industry (Nitecki and Herson 2000).

Kiran (2010) listed the five dimensions as follows:

- **Tangibles** – these include the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials;
- **Reliability** – this includes the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately;
- **Responsiveness** – willingness to help customers and provide prompt service;
- **Assurance** – this has to do with knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence; and
- **Empathy** – the caring, individualised attention the firm provides its customers.

Ncwane (2016) quoted Simba (2006) when pointing out that the SERVQUAL instrument or questionnaire integrates all these dimensions to measure user expectations and perceptions of services delivered. The evaluation of service quality is done by measuring the gaps between expectations and perceptions. The comparison between the expectations and the perceptions determines whether the service is good or problematic. As articulated by Nagata et al. (2004), services are considered to be good if the perceptions meet or exceed the expectations and problematic if perceptions fall below expectations. This will be elaborated on later in the study.

The value of the model was recognised by librarians and introduced explicitly to the library world through several empirical studies undertaken in public, special and academic libraries as well as descriptive articles and conference presentations (Bhim 2010). According to Quinn (1997), the SERVQUAL model could be adapted to various areas within the academic library such as access services, reference services, and collection development. However, as pointed to earlier, the SERVQUAL model was initially designed for retail, industrial and commercial environments and when adapted for a library environment was found to have various shortcomings in the questionnaire (Naidu 2009). The “academic criticism of the validity and feasibility of SERVQUAL ... [was] ... accompanied by proposals for alternative service quality measures” (Newman 2001:126). This criticism and quest for alternative service quality measures resulted in the development of LibQUAL+TM.

### 2.6.2 LibQUAL+TM

The adaptation of the SERVQUAL instrument to LibQUAL+TM, a web-based instrument grounded in actual users’ perspectives extracted from qualitative data only came about in the year 2000 (Lincoln 2000). The LibQUAL+TM instrument underwent several revisions in terms of dimensions (see below) and core items during its developmental period. Under the



auspices of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) in partnership with the Texas A&M University, the instrument was developed, tested and refined in various library settings involving data collection from more than 200 000 library users. It has emerged as a standardised measure of library service quality across institutional library contexts (Blixurd 2002; ARL 2004). Since its inception, more than 400 institutions have participated in LibQUAL+™ surveys and these have included universities and colleges, law libraries, health sciences libraries and a few public libraries. The instrument has been translated into 16 languages and used in countries like America, Canada, Australia, Egypt, England, Ireland, Holland and Scotland (Bahrainizadeh 2013). SA is also one of the countries in which LibQUAL+™ surveys have been conducted.

According to Kachoka (2010) the instrument is now recognised as a standard tool for measuring the quality of library service. She concurred with Naidu (2009) when said LibQUAL+™ has evolved into a protocol consisting of “22 items and a box” (Naidu 2009). Kachoka (2010) further explained that this instrument contains 22 core items which yield quantitative data from close questions and it also yields qualitative data through user comments. The instrument can be modified to suit the local and public library environment as was done in this study.

The 22 items are regarded as core and span three dimensions, namely:

- **Effect of service** – focuses on how well users are served and treated by library staff.
- **Information control** – focuses on the ability to access information regardless of the location of the user or the resource in question.
- **Library as a place** – focuses on the physical environment and how well the library meets the individual needs of users (ARL 2004).

The “box” secures open-ended comments from users regarding their concerns and suggestions. These comments are an integral part of LibQUAL+™ (Naidu 2009).

The LibQUAL+™ survey is designed to measure library users’ perceptions of the quality of collections, personal service and facilities (LibQUAL+™ 2008). Bhim (2010) states that it can assist libraries in assessing and improving services, changing organisational culture and informing marketing strategies. Naidu (2009) makes the important point that instruments such as LibQUAL+™ can prove to be effective assessment tools but their effectiveness is

contingent on the library community making a committed (and sustained) effort to actively enhance service quality.

According to the ARL (2008), the goals of LibQUAL+™ are to:

- Foster a culture of excellence in providing library services
- Assist libraries in having a better understanding of user perceptions of library service quality
- Collect and interpret library user feedback systematically over time
- Provide libraries with comparable assessment information from peer institutions
- Identify best practices in library services
- Enhance library staff members' analytical skills for interpreting and acting on data.

Given the above, it is patently evident that LibQUAL+™ has much to offer libraries in terms of assessing the services they provide and it is perhaps not surprising that many institutions have adopted the LibQUAL+™ protocol. As noted in Chapter 1, it also underpinned this study which assessed the expectations and perceptions of adult users of the services offered by the NPL.

However, the use of LibQUAL+™ is not without possible stumbling blocks. Quinn (1997), for example, makes the point that libraries need to monitor customer expectations continuously in an effort to reduce any gap that may exist between expectations and perceptions. Thus, assessments must not be one-off events and provision needs to be made for assessments on a regular basis such as annually or bi-annually. Waller and Hippias (2002) point to the need to develop what they refer to as “a culture of assessment within libraries” and see this as a crucial step towards establishing the importance of assessment tools and projects such as LibQUAL+™ and changing paradigms of assessment measures. Naidu (2009) notes that the gaps between customer expectations and perceptions may stem from librarians inaccurately perceiving the expectations of library users, from library service standards not reflecting expectations, from the library over-promising on its services, or from the actual services falling short of customer expectations. She further notes that even with adequate customer feedback, it can sometimes be difficult to interpret data because customers' expectations and perceptions are inherently subjective and can be contradictory and naïve (Naidu 2009).

Given the above concerns, it could be suggested that the adult users of the NPL were not in a position to make valid assessments of service quality. While acknowledging that these concerns are valid ones, the researcher, however, was of the opinion that the adult users of the NPL would be able to recognise excellent service from poor service irrespective of the extent to which they had been exposed to such services and their subsequent perceptions of these services could be seen as largely valid ones. Arguably, all assessment tools have their limitations and the LibQUAL+TM is no exception.

As noted above, LibQUAL+TM has been used in many libraries around the world as a means to assess and (ideally) improve upon the quality of the services provided. Also as noted above, while the emphasis has been on the academic library, there are instances where LibQUAL+TM has been used in the public library. A brief selection of the research in both types of libraries is reported on below. The focus is largely on the African and South African context and one of the studies did use the SERVQUAL instrument.

## **2.7 Research using LibQUAL+TM and SERVQUAL in libraries (academic and public)**

Hiller (2001) conducted a study that looked at assessing user needs, satisfaction and library performance at the University of Washington libraries. Surveys, according to Hiller (2001), had become an important tool used by the university to assess user needs, satisfaction and library performance. A web-based LibQUAL+TM survey was used as the data collection instrument. The entire faculty was asked to participate and random sampling was used for the students (both undergraduate and graduate students participated). The results of the study showed deviations within groups with regards to library satisfaction and use. Results indicated that there were variations in expectations and perceptions, but users were satisfied, overall, with the services provided by the library.

A study by Simba (2006) titled “User perceptions of the quality of service at Iringa University College Library, Tumaini University”, assessed whether the library was meeting the service quality expectations of users. The sample comprised 294 undergraduate students, 31 postgraduates and 50 academic staff. Findings from the LibQUAL+TM questionnaire survey revealed that there was a gap between users’ desired expectations and perceived levels of service. The library performed poorly in the following services: electronic journals, photocopiers, interlibrary loan, electronic databases, a quiet library environment and a library webpage with useful information. Different user groups varied in their responses to the desired

and perceived level of service with academic staff having higher expectations as compared with the other groups. Simba (2006) believed that the results could help improve the service quality of the library and new services could be introduced to meet the needs of the users.

In South Africa a study using the LibQUAL+™ instrument was conducted at Rhodes University in a study by Moon (2007). The research was aimed at illustrating how LibQUAL+™ as a turn-key survey instrument could provide the type of benchmarking information that could facilitate targeted service improvements. According to Moon (2007), the use of the survey at Rhodes University was most valuable as it fulfilled an important function in evaluating the impact of implemented strategies and innovations. Moon (2007) stated that the survey was an ideal opportunity for librarians to listen to what their customers had to say and respond to their comments.

Another study conducted in SA, the study examined user perceptions of the quality of service of, and the level of user satisfaction with, the Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) Library (Naidu 2009). In line with the LibQUAL+™ approach, this was done from the perspective of the users of the library, namely, undergraduate and postgraduate students as well as academic and administrative staff selected via a stratified random sampling method. This study determined where the gaps were between users' expectations and perceptions of service quality, it indicated the level of user satisfaction at the library and recommended where there were needs for improvement. According to Naidu (2009), huge gaps between user expectations and perceptions of service quality were found. Library facilities and an inadequate and outdated book collection were identified as problematic areas. Overall, the academic staff regarded the quality of services as good whilst the students regarded it as poor.

Another study examining undergraduate students' perceptions of the quality of service received from their library was done by Kachoka (2010) at Chancellor College in Malawi. Of the 285 undergraduate students who comprised the population, 186 responded to the LibQUAL+™ survey. The findings indicated that the undergraduate students had higher expectations of service quality than the perceived quality of service. The findings also indicated that the library was not meeting the minimum expectations of its users in all three dimensions of service quality: effect of service, library as place and information control.

A more recent study conducted by Ncwane (2016) examined the quality of service provided by the Mangosuthu University of Technology's Natural Sciences Library (MUT-NSL) from the

perspective of the users of the library. The purpose of the study, which used the LibQUAL+™ instrument, was to determine the gaps between user expectations and perceptions of service quality and to ascertain the level of user satisfaction at the library. Users comprised both postgraduate and undergraduate students as well as academic staff. The three dimensions of service quality, that is, Access to information, Staff services and Library facility (library as place) formed the core of the instrument. While findings were on the whole positive, significant gaps were found between expectations and perceptions with regard to timeous interlibrary loans (under Access to information); an adequate number of computer workstations; sufficient space for group learning and group study; and computers that work well in the library (under Library facility/library as place). Ncwane (2016) stated that the results of the study would, in the future, be used for service improvements and to make informed decisions concerning the quality of service that is offered at the MUT-NSL.

Also more recently, a study by Kekane (2017) investigated postgraduate students' perception of the main library at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) Pietermaritzburg campus as an environment for reading, studying and research. The objective of the study was to determine postgraduate students' expectations and perceptions of service quality. It also aimed to determine the gap between the existence of users' expectations and perceptions of quality service. This study also wanted to find out the level of satisfaction of the postgraduate students with quality service provided at the library. A sample of 169 postgraduate students (from Diploma to PhD level) in the School of Social Sciences completed an adapted LibQUAL+™ questionnaire. Kekane (2017) found that the students had high expectations for almost every service offered by the library and that they were satisfied with most of the services. However, as with Ncwane's study, perceptions with some of the services were low: the number of computer workstations and computers that worked well were seen as inadequate; an efficient short loan service and a quiet library environment were lacking; and the library was perceived as not assisting students in staying abreast of developments in their academic field. The study recommended that service quality needed to be improved, an aspect which would increase the students' positive perceptions of the library.

Moving to a public library context (and SERVQUAL) Zakaria et al. (2009) used the SERVQUAL tool to conduct a service quality survey in Sungai Petani Public Library in Malaysia. The objective of their study was to identify the relationship between the dimensions (tangibles, reliability and responsiveness) and service quality in the library and to investigate

which service quality dimension most influenced the provision of service quality. The results of the study found that the tangible dimension had a significant relationship with service quality.

A second public library study using the LibQUAL+™ instrument was done by Bhim (2010) and examined adult user perceptions of the services provided by Bessie Head Library in Pietermaritzburg, SA. The purpose of this study was to determine whether the services provided by the library were meeting the expectations of the library users. Her objectives for conducting this study were to determine library users' perceptions of the quality of library service and to determine whether there is a gap between the expectations and perceptions of library users. A sample of 200 registered adult library users was selected from a population of 26 966 library members. The results of the study indicated that Bessie Head Library was providing a quality service but only to a certain extent. The adult users of the library had varying levels of expectations and perceptions for services in each category, for example, Staff services (unusually) indicated higher perceptions than expectations and Access to information and Library facilities indicated higher expectations than perceptions. This illustrated that the users' actual experiences of some services offered by the library were to their satisfaction whilst other services were not up to standard.

Bhim (2010) argued that the LibQUAL+™ survey instrument has allowed for library management and staff to listen to what their customers have to say about the services and the library in general and respond to their comments. At the same time, the instrument (and the survey) has informed the library users about the services offered. She further stated that both LibQUAL+™ and SERVQUAL have shown that user focus and user involvement have created an interactive, dynamic environment that has facilitated overall quality improvement in both academic and public libraries

## **2.8 Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of the NPL. This was followed by a brief discussion of the role of public libraries in combatting social exclusion and promoting social capital. Various points concerning public libraries in a democratic SA were made. Concepts introduced in the introductory chapter, namely, service quality and user satisfaction were further discussed. Measuring or assessing service quality in libraries was deliberated. In this regard, the use of SERVQUAL and the LibQUAL+™ instrument, which was the instrument adapted for this

study, was discussed. The chapter ended with an overview of some of the research conducted, in the main, with the LibQUAL+™ instrument. While most of the studies concerned the academic library there were two which had been done in the public library context.

Chapter 3 is next and describes and discusses the research methodology used in the study.

## **Chapter 3 – Research methodology**

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the research methodology used in the study. The research design, data collection instrument and procedure, validity and reliability, sampling technique and methods of data analysis are outlined and discussed. The chapter ends with a discussion of the ethical issues involved in research and this study.

Rajasekar et al (2013) define research methodology as a systematic way to solve a problem. It is the science of studying how research is to be carried out. Rajasekar et al (2013) further posit that research methods are the various procedures, schemes and algorithms used in research. Research methods help the researcher to identify samples, collect data and find solutions.

### **3.1 Research design**

Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006) defined research design as a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between the research questions and the execution and implementation of the research. Bless and Higson-Smith (1995) defined research design as a specification of the most adequate operations to be performed in order to test a specific hypothesis under given conditions. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006). “The design is a plan that guides the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure”.

Kothari (2004) argues that there are two basic approaches to research, that is, quantitative and qualitative research methods. Both these approaches are essential to the research process but Bouma (2000) argued that they require some common and some different skills. Bhim (2010) states that the use of an approach depends on the research topic and appropriateness of the questions asked and she further states that each approach has its own rules of practice.

This study adopted a largely quantitative approach guided by a post-positivism paradigm. Post-positivistic paradigm promotes the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methods that explores the diversity of facts researchable through various kinds of investigations but respecting and valuing all findings as the essential components for the development of knowledge (Clark 1998 and Fischer 1998). Post-positivism is basically an abstract theory,



based on the philosophy of knowledge. Most of its implications are based on the inability to assert, with certainty, that one's conclusions are true. Consequently, all research results are potentially prone to error and can never be proven in any final sense. Post-positivism posits that the social world is patterned and that causal relationships can be discovered and tested via reliable strategies (Engele 2014) . According to Wildemuth (2003) a post-positivist research approach advocates methodological pluralism. It is based on the assumption that the method to be applied in a particular study should be selected based on the research question being addressed.

The purpose of the study was to determine the users' perceptions of the quality of library service by Nongoma Public Library (NPL) using the LibQUAL+™ instrument which is largely quantitative in nature consisting mostly of closed questions. According to Bertram (2004), quantitative analysis measures phenomena using numbers in combination with statistical procedures to process data and summarise results. A descriptive survey design was used in the study (Babbie and Mouton 2001). According to Powell (1997), the most straightforward type of survey research is descriptive and it is designed to ensure that the sample is reasonably representative of the population which the researcher wishes to generalise to and the relevant characteristics of the population have been accurately measured. Through this study library management would not only have to rely on quantitative measures when determining the success or the failure of the library but the library users are consulted to express themselves to give their expectations and perceptions of the services they receive from the library. It is through this study where the library could boast about serving its community or not by satisfying or not satisfying its users.

The survey design was chosen for this study for the following two reasons:

Firstly, most of the studies on users' perceptions of the quality of service have used the survey design. For example, the vast majority of the studies on users' perceptions of service quality reviewed in the previous chapter (Thapisa and Gamini 1999; Hiller 2001; Simba 2006; Moon 2007; Sahu 2007; Naidu 2009; Kachoka 2010; Bhim 2010; Ncwane 2016; and Kekane 2017) used the survey design. Given this, the decision to use such a design in the current study was considered a valid one. Secondly, the survey design is economical in that it allows the gathering of a large amount of data in a short space of time on a once-off basis in order to describe the nature of existing conditions (Simba 2006). This was an important consideration for the study in that there were financial constraints and a time limitation (Bertram 2004). The speed of

gathering information and the fact that the design allowed for collecting data within a short period was advantageous. These were also important considerations in Bhim's (2010) study of adult users' perceptions of the services at the Bessie Head Library.

### **3.2 Population**

In this section, the population of the study from which the sample was drawn is described and discussed. The population is any group that is the subject of the research interest (Goddard and Melville 2011). According to Babbie (2011), population means a complete set of elements (persons or objects) that have some common characteristics defined by the sampling criteria established by the research. Trochin (2000) states that the population refers to the larger group from which the sample is taken and to which findings are to be generalised. Finally, according to Bless and Higson-Smith (2000), the term population refers to the entire set of objects or people which is the focus of the study. In this study, registered adult library users of the NPL were the focus of the study and, therefore, comprised the population. The common characteristics of the population being studied were that they were all registered adult library users of the NPL and they all belonged to the Nongoma community in which the library is located. According to the NPL database, the population of the study (or sampling frame) from which the sample was drawn consisted of 819 adult registered library users whose names and contact details were on record. Of the total number of members, 495 were female and 322 were male.

### **3.3 Sampling and sample size**

Sampling can be explained as the specific approach used to select members of the population to be included in the study. Kachoka (2010) states that sampling is an important step in survey research especially for populations which are too large for everyone in the population to be studied. Powell (1997) argued that sampling is often one of the most crucial steps in survey research and he defined a sample as a selection of units from the total population to be studied. In terms of the type of sampling used in the study, the initial intention of the researcher was to adopt a stratified proportional sampling approach. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) posit that stratified sampling involves the selection of a sample that represents the relevant subgroups (strata) of the population. The number of participants or respondents in each of the strata is dictated by their number relative to the entire population. Thus, the stratum (or subgroup) female library users comprised 60% of the population at the time and this proportion was

reflected in the final sample. While the intention was to have further strata comprising age categories the difficulty in arranging this soon became apparent. Phoning specific respondents and asking them (once they had agreed to participate) to commit to a specific time to meet in the library to complete a questionnaire proved to be very difficult. Some respondents would agree to meet in the library at a certain time but would never pitch hence it tend to be difficult for researcher to continue with the stratified sampling.

Given the above, a decision was then made to adopt a convenience sampling approach – one in which respondents were approached to participate once they were in the library. According to Brymann and Bell (2011) convenience sampling (also known as availability sampling) is a specific type of non-probability sampling method that relies on data collection from population members who are conveniently available to participate in a study. The first available subject is used in this sampling method without any additional requirements and there are no prior criteria used when selecting the sample. In a convenience sample, people who will comprise the sample are thus easy to identify and reach. However, as noted above, control of the male-female numbers was maintained approaching potential respondents for the study and as far as possible respondents reflecting a range of ages were selected. The distribution of the questionnaire is described in more detail under 3.7 below.

A very important issue in sampling is determining the ideal size of the sample (Bless and Higson-Smith 2000). Crucial here is the need to select a sample sufficient in size to be representative of the population from which it is drawn and to which the findings can be generalised. In this regard, a sample size calculator (Powell and Connaway 2004) was used and given a population of 819 a sample size of 262 was arrived at (achieving a confidence level of 95% and a five per cent confidence interval). Thus, the sample, in accordance with the stratified proportional approach initially adopted, would comprise 157 females and 105 males. As outlined above (and below) maintaining proportional strata with respect to the age of respondents was not possible. The researcher was of the opinion that a sample of 262 respondents was achievable and within the scope of the study from both a methodological and financial point of view. The response rate (given the sample of 262) is described under 3.8 below.

### **3.4 Sampling frames**

Mouton (1996) posits that the key concept in sampling is representativeness. A sample is a group of people, objects or items that are taken from a larger population for measurements. According to Naidu (2009) when the data serving as the basis for generalisations is comprised of a subset of the population, that subset is called a sample. According to Bless and Higson-Smith (2000) the use of a complete and correct sampling frame is essential. A sampling frame is the list from which units sample is to be drawn for the sample. Earl (2011) states that sampling frame is the list or quasi list of elements from which a probability sample is selected. Earl (2011) further argues if the sample is to be representative of the population, it is essential that the sampling frame includes all (or nearly all) members of the population. In this study the sampling frame is derived from the database of registered adult library users. The sample for female is 157 and the sample for males is 105 making a total sample of 260.

### **3.5 Data collection instrument**

Powell (1997) states that three frequently used data collection techniques are the questionnaire, the interview and observation. Powell (1997) further states that these are data collection techniques or instruments and not research methodologies and that they can be used with more than one methodology. According to Simba (2006), instruments in research refer to the methods that are used to collect data to answer the research questions. The instrument used in this study for collecting both qualitative and quantitative data was the questionnaire which, according to Simba (2006), is a method of gathering self-reported information from respondents through self-administration of questions. The questionnaire is further discussed below.

#### **3.5.1 The questionnaire**

Neuman (2006) states that the use of a questionnaire is by far the cheapest data collection instrument and can be conducted by a single researcher – both important considerations in this study. Babbie and Mouton (2001) also mention that a further advantage of the self-administered questionnaire is that it lacks interview bias. For the purpose of this study (and as mentioned previously) the LibQUAL+™ instrument was adopted and modified to suit the intended research participants. Its usage, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, is well-documented and has been applied in a number of local studies, for example, Naidu (2009); Bhim (2010);

Ncwane (2016) and Kekane (2016) to mention a few. The questionnaire used in the study consisted of five pages and eight sections and, in line with Terre Blanche and Durrheim's (1999) view that the compilation of questions is a crucial aspect of developing any assessment instrument, it is further described below:

Section one of the questionnaire elicited demographic data on the participants, namely, their gender, age and race as well as data on their usage of the library.

Section two consisted of 26 statements which respondents are asked to rate on a scale from 1-5 (that is, strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree) their expectations of service quality at the NPL.

Section three comprised an open question where respondents were asked to add comments on existing services or services that they expected.

Section four had similar statements to those in Section two except that respondents were asked to rate their perceptions of library services currently provided by the library.

Section five had an open question similar to section three.

Sections six and seven had statements on user satisfaction and respondents had to indicate whether they were very satisfied, satisfied, neutral, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the services provided by the library.

The questionnaire ended with section eight in which an open question was asked.

A copy of the questionnaire used in the study is contained in Appendix 2.

The questionnaire thus comprised a mix of both open and closed questions thereby collecting both objective and subjective data (Fitzgibbons 2003) and, in line with the largely quantitative nature of the study, closed questions predominated. The two different forms of question are further discussed below:

### **3.5.1.1 Open questions**

Open questions give the respondents the opportunity to write any answer in the open space provided (De Vos 1998). Babbie and Mouton (2001) posit that in the case of open questions,

the respondent is asked to provide an answer in his or her own words. Ncwane (2016) concurs with Bhim (2010) in saying that open questions are advantageous as they allow respondents to answer in their own choice of words and give unprompted answers which could be beneficial. Similarly, Ncwane (2016) states that open questions sometimes provide beneficial and surprising suggestions and information. However, according to Bhim (2010), open questions are also disadvantageous because they require more thought and time to complete on the part of the respondents and, as a result, they may be ignored by the respondents. A further disadvantage is the difficulty of automatically tabulating or performing statistical analysis on these kinds of questions (Fitzgibbons 2003).

### **3.5.1.2 Closed questions**

Bhim (2010) states that closed questions offer the respondents the opportunity of selecting (according to instructions) one or more response choices from a number provided in the questionnaire. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), in the case of structured or closed questions, the respondent is asked to select an answer from among a list provided by the researcher. Closed questions are advantageous when a substantial amount of information about a subject exists and the response options are relatively well known (Ncwane 2016). The degree, frequency and comprehensiveness of a phenomenon can be ascertained quite meaningfully by means of closed questions (De Vos 1998). Other advantages of closed questions are that the results of the investigation can be quickly available, respondents have a better understanding of the questions, questions can be answered within the same framework, and responses can consequently be easily compared with one another (De Vos 1998). Furthermore, closed questions are advantageous because the response pattern has already been developed as part of the instrument construction and all one needs to do at this stage is to assign a numerical value to each category.

As noted above, in line with the predominantly quantitative nature of this study, the majority of questions in the instrument were closed. They consisted of nominal scale questions (elicited demographic data), ordinal scaled questions (respondents rated their degree of agreement or disagreement with a statement) and finally, matrix questions (questions which have the same set of answer categories). As argued by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) these questions are extremely popular, and they have a great advantage of being simple to record and score and they allow for easy comparison and quantification of the results. Like open questions, closed questions also have their disadvantages, and these include that they may introduce bias,

either by forcing the respondent to choose from given alternatives or by making the respondent select alternatives that might not have otherwise come to mind (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 1992).

### **3.6 Reliability and validity of the instrument**

According to Bouma (2000), validity is crucial in the construction of questionnaires which measure a person's attitudes, beliefs or values. An assessment of the quality of the collected data depends on determining the reliability and validity of the survey instruments. Ngulube (2005) argues that the validity and reliability of instruments are critical in research. According to Williams (2003), for a questionnaire to be valid, it should examine the full scope of the research question in a balanced way. In terms of the present study, the questionnaire was designed to ensure that it provided adequate coverage of the research questions guiding the study. According to Heale and Twycross (2015) reliability is achieved when the findings of a study yield the same result if the investigation were to be repeated (referred to as test-retest reliability) and validity establishes the quality of the research design in answering the research question. Babbie and Mouton (2001) state that no matter how carefully a questionnaire may be designed, there is always the possibility of error and the surest protection against such errors is to pre-test the questionnaire in full and/or in part. Thus, to ensure reliability and validity of the questionnaire, a pre-test was carried out on adult users to ensure that the instrument was free of ambiguities and that the conclusions drawn were reliable (Bhim 2010). The pre-testing of the questionnaire is described in more detail below.

It must also be stressed (and as previously pointed out) that the questionnaire used in the study was an adaption of the LibQUAL+TM instrument which has been employed and acknowledged in numerous academic and research library settings around the world. While its applicability to the public library context is not fully established (if studies have been undertaken, the results have yet to be published) the study by Bhim (2010), which used the LibQUAL+TM instrument in a public library setting, was successful and there is nothing to suggest that the instrument cannot be used in public libraries. Simba (2006) has concluded that the LibQUAL+TM instrument has been thoroughly tested and its validity is well established. It measures what it is supposed to measure and can be replicated and yield the same results. Also crucial in terms of ensuring validity was the aforementioned pre-test and this is now described.

### **3.7 Pre-testing the questionnaire**

It is important to pre-test questionnaires to assess whether the line of questioning is appropriate and whether the document is understandable and simple to use (Newell 1993). Kumar (2011) states that pre-testing a research instrument entails a critical examination of the understanding of each question and its meaning by a respondent. Kumar (2011) further states that a pre-test should be carried out under actual field conditions on a group of people similar to one's study population and Newell (1993) points out that those participating in the pre-test should be encouraged to make suggestions that may improve the instrument. Pre-testing thus provides the researcher with an opportunity to identify questionnaire items that tend to be misunderstood by the participants and it allows respondents to point out problem questions, poor instructions and unnecessary or missing questions (Naidu 2009). The questionnaire used in the study was pre-tested on a random sample of 10 adults using the Ulundi Public Library. No problems in completing the questionnaires were identified or reported by the participants. The reason for choosing Ulundi Public Library was because both Ulundi Public Library and Nongoma Public Library fall within the same district municipality (ZDM) and both consist of similar characteristics like both libraries are located in rural communities, its people are mostly Africans and both libraries are "centrally" located. It was this reason the researcher chose to pilot her study at Ulundi Public Library. In addition, the questionnaire was also reviewed by various lecturers in the Information Studies Programme.

### **3.8 Distribution of the questionnaire**

In accordance with the ethical approach prescribed to (see 3.10 below) once the researcher had obtained permission from the municipal manager to conduct the study and the pre-test conducted, the questionnaires were distributed to respondents. In doing so cognisance was taken of Naidu's (2009) point that the systematic administration of the questionnaire is vital to ensure that the process of data collection is a smooth one.

The distribution of the questionnaires took place in the library over a period of one week. Given the relatively large sample size (262) the researcher was assisted in this task by her work colleagues. Each questionnaire had a covering letter attached explaining the purpose of the study as well as consent form which respondents had to sign. When an adult library user entered the library, they were asked if they would be prepared to participate in the study and if agreeable given the questionnaire. Hand delivery ensured that the respondent received the questionnaire.



Distribution was done at various intervals during the day in order to gain as wide a spread of members as possible. Thus, for example, in the mornings the pensioners and unemployed were targeted, at lunchtimes workers who were visiting the library during their lunch hour were approached and, in the afternoons, library users who visited the library with their children as well as those who had finished working were requested to participate. As noted above, control was maintained of the male-female distribution in the sample and as far as possible adults were chosen to reflect a range of age groups. A total of 262 questionnaires were distributed – 157 female and 105 male adult users of the library. While the respondents were requested to complete the questionnaire in the library, many chose not to do so and asked to complete the questionnaire in their own time at home. This was acceded too by the researcher and respondents were requested to return the completed questionnaire to the library by the end of the following week. Time constraints mean that no extensions could be given.

### **3.9 Ethical considerations**

Goddard and Melville (2011) argue that apart from instrumentation and procedural concerns, collecting data from people raises ethical concerns. Therefore, researchers need to protect and respect the participants when collecting data. Creswell (2003) states that as researchers embark on data collection, they need to respect the participants who are involved. Ethical issues are thus important considerations in research and are outlined and discussed below.

#### **3.9.1 Voluntary participation**

According to Babbie (2011), social research often requires that people reveal information about themselves – information that may be unknown to their friends and associates. He further states that social research often requires that such information be revealed to strangers. They (the researchers) need the information in order to serve the personal interests of the respondents. As a consequence, the participation in social, medical and other forms of research must be voluntary – no one should be forced to participate, and the respondent must be made aware that he or she may withdraw their participation at any time. This was done in the current study through respondents signing a consent to participate form (see Appendix 1).

### **3.9.2 No harm to the participants**

Babbie (2011) states that social research should never injure the people being studied, regardless of whether they volunteer for the study. This study did not injure or harm the participants as the information needed from them related to their experience and expectations of using NPL and was thus, arguably, non-threatening in nature.

### **3.9.3 Anonymity and confidentiality**

According to Crow and Wiles (2008), anonymity and confidentiality of participants are central to ethical research practice in social research. Babbie (2011) further states that the clearest concern in guarding the subjects' interests and wellbeing is the protection of their identity, especially in survey research. The two techniques to ensure no harm nor injury to the participants are anonymity and confidentiality. If revealing their survey responses would injure in any way, adhering to these norms becomes even more important. Often people confuse the two to be one and the same thing. In order to ensure anonymity, neither the researcher nor the readers of the findings can identify the respondent. In this study, anonymity was not possible as the researcher collected data from identifiable respondents. Confidentiality is ensured when the researcher can identify a given person's responses but promises not to do so publicly. In this study, the confidentiality was achieved because respondents were not asked to provide their names on the questionnaires (each was given a unique identification number) and thus responses could not be linked to identifiable respondents. As noted above, participants completed and signed an informed consent document which outlined the researcher's intentions.

### **3.9.4 Ethical clearance**

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), any researcher wishing to receive institutional research support must have his or her proposal approved by a research or ethics committee that reviews all research proposals which involve human subjects to ensure that their rights and interests are aligned to those of the institution. The present study complied with the ethical clearance guidelines of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

### **3.10 Summary**

This chapter presented the research methodology used in the study. In doing so, the research design, population, sampling, instrumentation, data collection procedure and methods of data analysis were discussed. This chapter also addressed the issues of reliability and validity and ended with a discussion of the ethical issues to be considered when conducting a study.

Chapter 4 follows and comprises the presentation of the findings of the survey.

## Chapter 4 –Data analysis and presentation of findings

### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the survey of the sampled population of adult users of Nongoma Public Library (NPL). The areas reported below can be categorised as follows:

Demographic characteristics; library usage patterns; users' expectations and perceptions of service quality; users' comments about Nongoma Public Library services; level of user-satisfaction; and the gap between users' expectations and perceptions. *Note:* N below refers to the number of respondents to whom a question was directed.

### 4.1 Data analysis

The information collected during the survey is referred to as raw data. Nichols (as quoted in Newane 2016) described the following four stages in processing and analysing raw data:

- Checking through the questionnaires and correcting errors;
- Coding;
- Preparing data tables; and
- Making sense of the data. This includes preparing summaries, measures, and using them to test ideas about the target population.

Data analysis consists of both qualitative and quantitative analyses which include processes such as thematic and content analysis, and quantitative or statistical analysis (Mouton 1996). Given the largely quantitative nature of the study the latter form of analysis, that is quantitative, was predominant. SPSS was used to analyse and interpret the data. Prior to this, each completed questionnaire was checked for missing data, ambiguity, omissions and errors. According to Bhim (2010), this process is known as data cleaning. Powell (1997) mentioned that cleaning data involves everything from simply reading results, looking for surprising responses and unexpected patterns, to verifying or checking the coding of the data. Once the data had been entered into SPSS, the program was used to generate frequency counts and percentages.

As described earlier, open questions give respondents the opportunity to state their own views regarding the library services. The responses to these questions were thus qualitative in nature and they were analysed and interpreted using content analysis. This involved reading carefully through the responses, constructing categories and allocating each response to one (or more) of the categories. The first step in content analysis involved the construction of categories. The categories for this study were: access to information; access to electronic resources; library facilities and staff services. Providing qualitative data, the responses to these questions were analysed and interpreted using content analysis. The categories were then coded and the quantified data entered into SPSS for subsequent processing. The data derived from the open questions offered some evidence about the main categories and trends relating to the study.

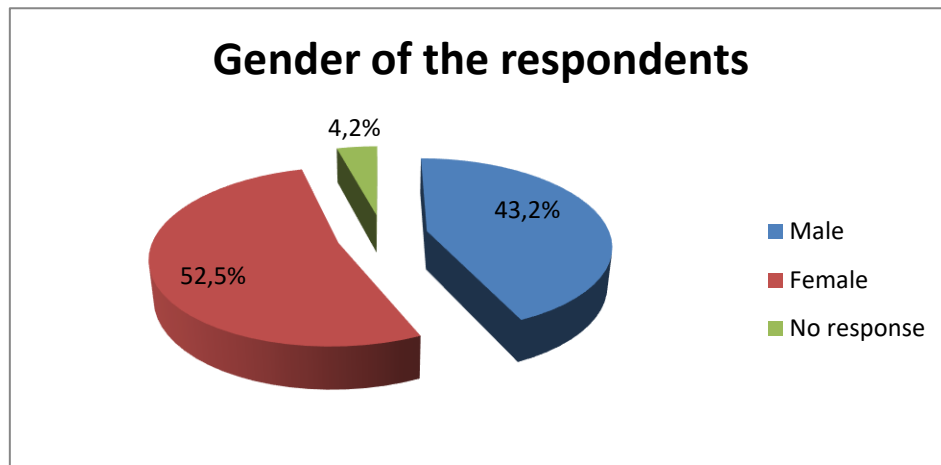
This section of the questionnaire asked respondents to provide their background information. Questions 1 to 3 determined the gender of the respondents, their age group and their race group. Findings are presented in Figures 3.1 to 3.3 below.

#### **4.2. Response rate**

According to Punch (2003) response rate “means the proportion of the selected sample who complete the questionnaire.” By the end of the following week, a total of 113 questionnaires had been completed and returned. Many of the adults who had taken the questionnaire home, unfortunately, failed to return it resulting in what could be described as a disappointing response rate of 43.1%. However, Ramshaw (n.d.) argues that a 40% per cent response rate is acceptable for analysis and reporting and the results could be generalised and be reflective of the population. Keller (2014) goes so far as to state that a good response rate is the one that is above 20% subject to having enough total responses. Similarly, Williams quoted by Simba (2006) argued that “a response rate of 20% for a self-administered questionnaire-based survey is sufficient to report the results.” Babbie and Mouton (2001) suggest that a questionnaire return rate of 50% is adequate for data analysis and reporting. While the response rate of 43.1% achieved was thus below the 50% mentioned by Babbie and Mouton (2001) it would be considered acceptable by Ramshaw (n.d.), Keller (2014) and William (in Simba 2006) above. While this rate could be considered as being adequate for analysis it is accepted that it does have negative implications, despite Ramshaw (n.d.) above, for the representativity of the sample and the subsequent generalisability of the findings. The composition of the sample in terms of gender, age and race is provided in Figures 3.1 to 3.3 below.

#### 4.1.1 Gender of respondents

N=113



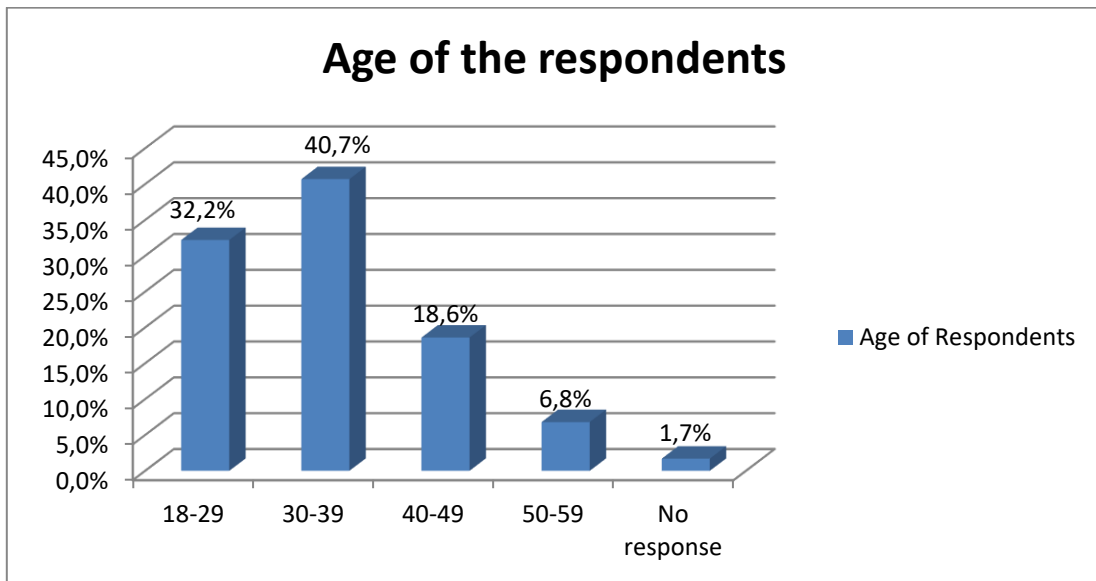
**Figure 4.1: Gender of the respondents**

As can be seen in Figure 4.1 above, the sample comprised more female (59; 52.5%) than male (49; 43.2%) respondents. Five (4.2%) respondents, somewhat surprisingly, did not respond to the question. As noted in the previous chapter, an attempt was made to ensure that the female to male ratio in the sample reflected that of the adult library membership as a whole. Non-response made this difficult, if not impossible. However, assuming the five respondents who did not indicate their gender were female, the female to male split was 57% to 43%, which was reasonably close to the 60% to 40% strived for.

#### 4.1.2 Age range of respondents

Question 1.2 asked respondents to indicate in which age range they fell and the findings are reflected in Figure 3.2 below.

N=113

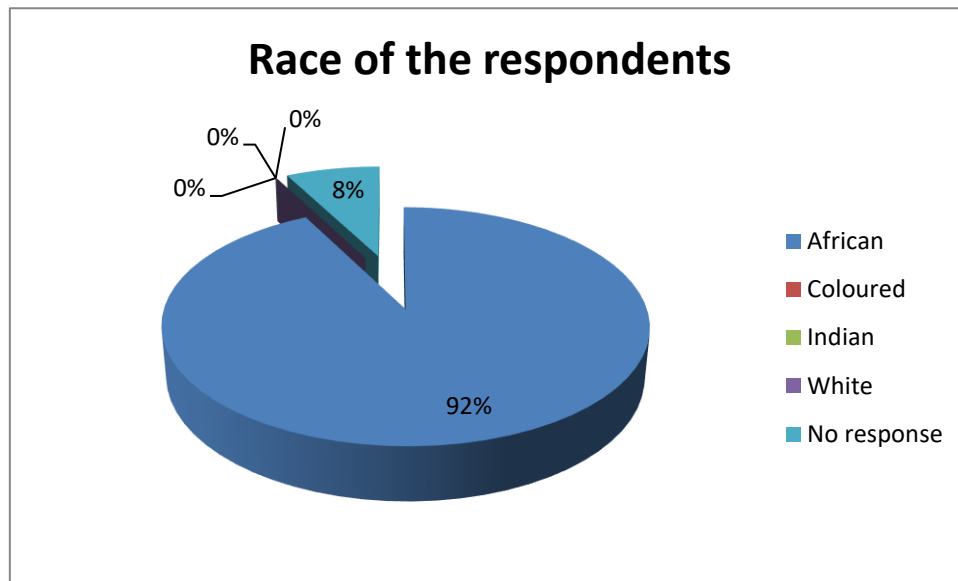


**Figure 4.2: Age range of the respondents**

Results in Figure 4.2 above show that the age range with the highest number of respondents was 30-39 years representing 40.7% (46) of the respondents. This was followed by 38 (32.2%) respondents who were in the range 18-29 years. The least represented age group was the age range 50-59 with eight (6.8%) respondents.

### 4.1.3 Race of the respondents

N=113



**Figure 4.3: Race of the respondents**

As can be seen in Figure 4.3 the vast majority of respondents (104; 92%) described themselves as African. Nine (8%) respondents, perhaps understandably, did not indicate their race.

## 4.2 Response rate

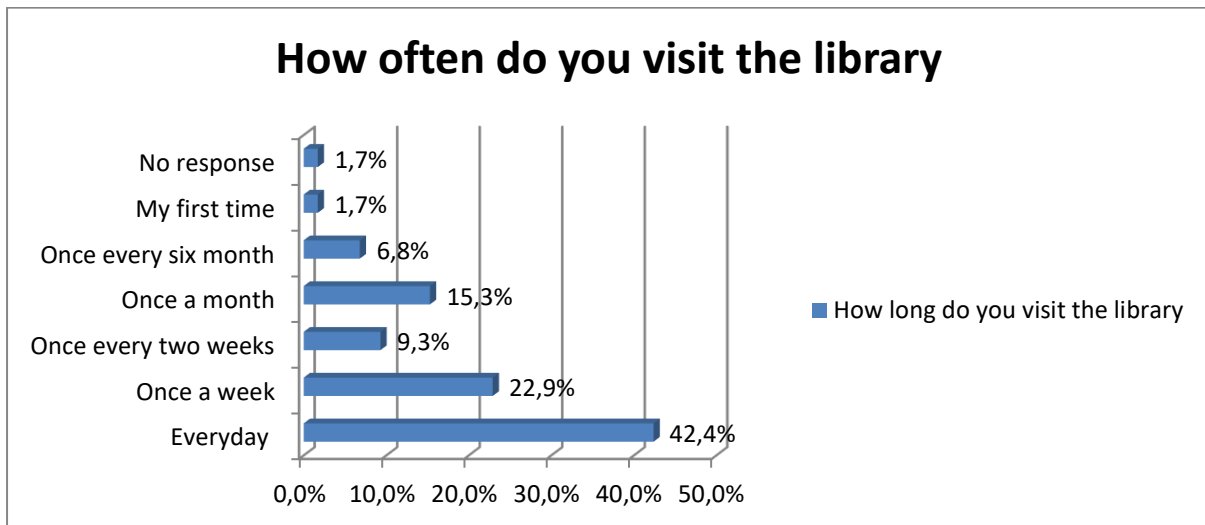
This section determined how often respondents visited the library, how often they used resources in the library and, more specifically, how often they accessed the library's electronic resources.

### 4.2.1 Library visits

Question 1.4 asked respondents how often they visited the NPL. Their responses are provided in Figure 4.1 below.



N=113



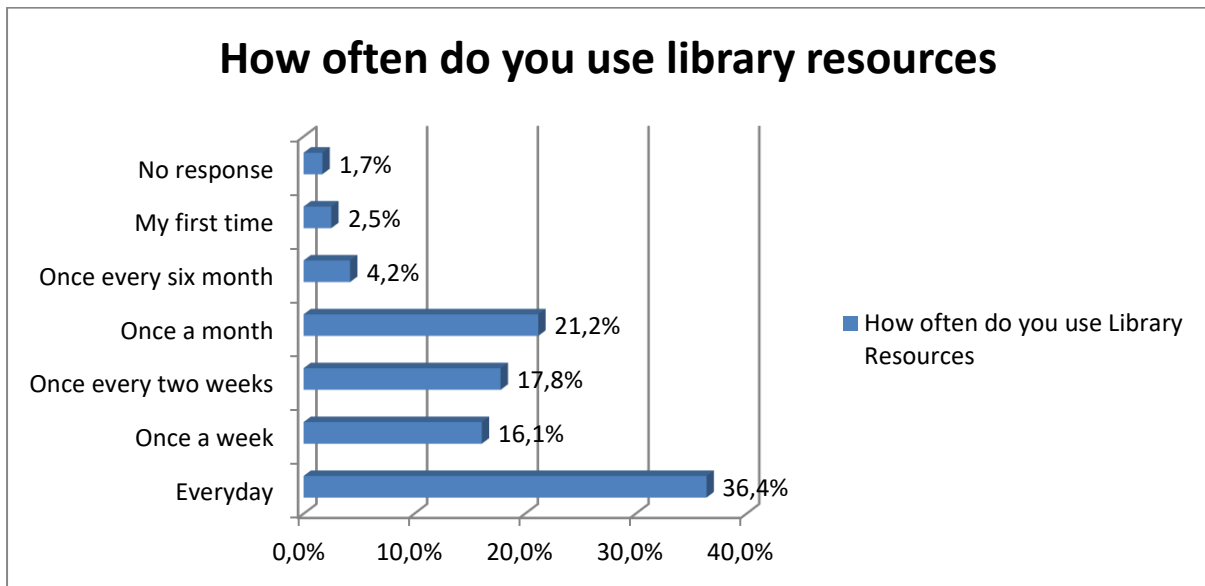
**Figure 4.4: Frequency of visits to the library**

A substantial minority of respondents 48 (42.4%) indicated that they visit the library every day. When combined with the other frequencies of visits it is pleasing to see that the vast majority of respondents 101 (89.4%) visited the library at least once a month or more. One may assume that the users who most frequented the library were those who were studying through tertiary distance learning institutions such as the University of South Africa (UNISA) as they cannot easily access their institutions' libraries.

#### **4.2.2 Use of library resources**

Question 1.5 determined how frequently the respondents used the various library resources.

N=113



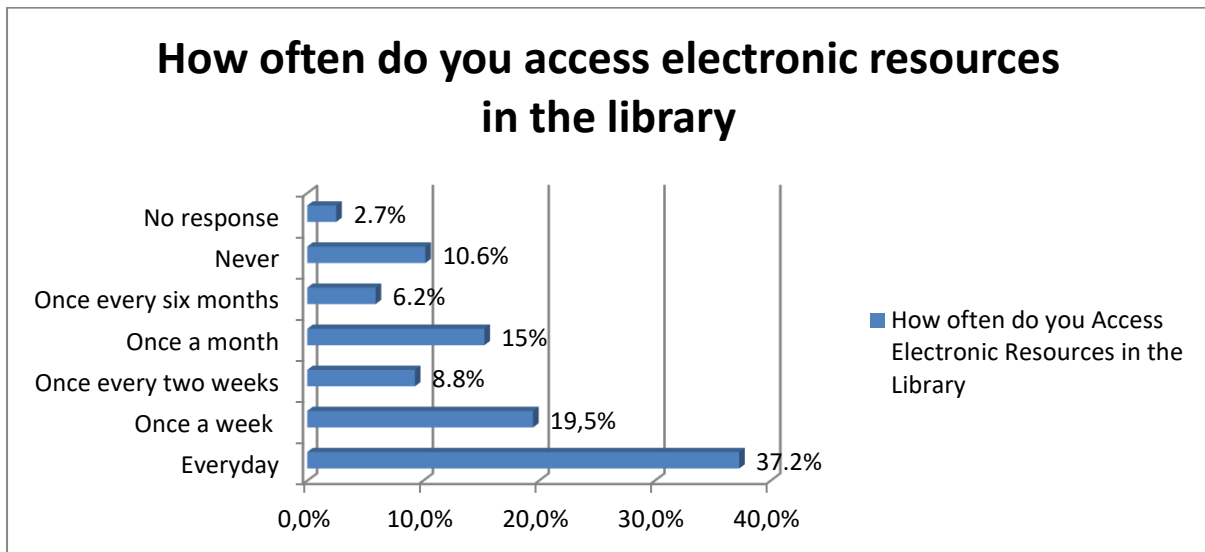
**Figure: 4.5 Frequency of use of library resources**

Again, a fairly large minority 41 (36.4%) of respondents indicated that they used the library resources every day. As with the frequency of library visits the vast majority 104 (92%) used the library resources once a month or more. Five (4.2%) respondents only used library resources once every six months.

#### **4.2.3 Frequency of accessing electronic resources**

Question 1.6 was asked to determine the frequency respondents accessed the electronic resources of the library and the findings are depicted in Figure 4.6 below.

N=113



**Figure 4.6 Frequency of accessing electronic resources**

The result shows 42 (37.2%) of the respondents accessed electronic resources in the library every day. The next highest number was the 22 (19.5%) respondents who accessed the resources once a week. Interestingly, 12 (10.6%) of respondents indicated that they never accessed the electronic resources in the library

### **4.3 Users' expectations and perceptions of service quality**

Questions two and four were regarded as vital since they were directly related to the research questions on which study was based. Responses provided would not only indicate the expectations and perceptions the respondents had of the library services but would also, importantly identify the gap between the two and by so doing point to the library's weaknesses and strengths.

#### **4.3.1 Users' expectations of service quality**

Question two had 26 statements regarding users' expectations of service quality at Nongoma Public Library. The respondents were asked to rate the statements on a scale (1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = neutral; 4 = disagree and 5 = strongly disagree) by indicating the number that best described their expectations of the quality of services provided by the library. These statements were divided into four categories, namely, Staff services, Access to information,

Library facility and General and the respondents' expectations in relation to the various categories are reflected in Tables 2.1 to 2.4 below.

#### 4.3.1.1 Staff services

Question 2.1 was asked in order to determine respondents' expectations with regards to Staff services. The respondents' expectations are demonstrated in Table 2.1 below.

**Table 4.1: Users' expectations of staff services**

N=113

<b>Statements I expect the library to provide:</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>		<b>Agree</b>		<b>Neutral</b>		<b>Disagree</b>		<b>Strongly Disagree</b>		<b>No response</b>	
	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
Staff who instil confidence in users	91	80.5	16	14.2	2	1.8	4	3.5	-	-	-	-
Staff who are consistently courteous	89	78.8	17	15	4	3.5	2	1.8	1	0.9	-	-
Staff who respond to users' questions	92	81.4	16	14.2	3	2.7	-	-	2	1.8	-	-
Staff who understand the needs of users	89	78.8	18	15.8	3	2.7	1	0.9	1	0.9	1	0.9
Staff who are willing to assist users	92	81.4	16	14.2	4	3.5	-	-	1	0.9	-	-
Staff who are knowledgeable to user-related queries	92	81.4	12	10.6	7	6.2	1	0.9	1	0.9	-	-
Readers advisor to assist with reading request	91	80.5	15	13.3	5	4.4	1	0.9	1	0.9	-	-

The results presented in Table 4.1 show that the overwhelming majority of respondents had high expectations with regard to the various statements relating to Staff services. The two statements receiving the most agreement (both agree and strongly agree) were "Staff who respond to users' questions" and "Staff who are willing to assist users" – both having 95.6% of respondents in agreement. The "least" agreement was with the statement "Staff who are

knowledgeable to user queries” indicated by a still very high 92% of respondents.

Worryingly, there were some respondents, albeit a very small minority, who disagreed with the statements, but these respondents were generally less than those respondents who remained neutral.

#### 4.3.1.2 Access to information

Question 2.2 was asked in order to determine respondents’ expectations of Access to information. The respondents’ expectations of service quality in relation to Access to information are reflected in Table 2.2 below.

**Table 4.2: User’s expectations of Access to information**

N=113

<b>Statements I expect the library to provide:</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>		<b>Agree</b>		<b>Neutral</b>		<b>Disagree</b>		<b>Strongly Disagree</b>		<b>No Response</b>	
	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
A comprehensive print collection	94	83.2	14	12.3	2	1.8	2	1.8	1	0.9	-	-
An adequate audio-visual collection	86	76.6	18	15.8	6	4.9	2	1.8	1	0.9	-	-
Access to Online Public Access Catalogue	93	81.9	12	11	7	6.2	1	0.9	-	-	-	-
An efficient inter-library loan services	85	75.3	21	18.5	4	3.5	2	1.8	1	0.9	-	-
An efficient reserve service	84	74.4	21	18.6	5	4.4	2	1.8	1	0.9	-	-
A comprehensive reference collection	82	72.7	23	20.2	5	4.4	2	1.8	1	0.9	-	-
Well placed signage for easy access to reading material	89	78.7	13	11.5	8	7.3	3	2.5	-	-	-	-
Efficient internet access	92	81.5	14	12.3	4	3.5	2	1.8	1	0.9	-	-

The results presented in Table 4.2 show that the vast majority of the respondents had high expectations with regard to the various statements relating to Access to information. All statements scored higher than 90% in terms of agreement. The three statements receiving the most agreement (both strongly agree and agree) were “A comprehensive print collection” (95.5%), “An efficient inter-library loan service” (93.8%) and “Efficient internet access” (93.8%). The “least” agreement was with the statement “Well placed signage for easy access” indicated by a still very high 90.2% of respondents. Again, there were some respondents, albeit a very small minority, who disagreed with the statements.

#### 4.3.1.3 Library facility

Question 2.3 was asked in order to determine users’ expectations with the facilities of the library.

**Table 4.3: Users’ expectations of library facility**

N=113

<b>Statements I expect:</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>		<b>Agree</b>		<b>Neutral</b>		<b>Disagree</b>		<b>Strongly Disagree</b>		<b>No Response</b>	
	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
A library that is conveniently located	89	78.8	18	15.9	5	4.4	1	0.9	-	-	-	-
A library that is visually appealing	84	74.5	20	17.7	7	6	1	0.9	1	0.9	-	-
A library that has adequate light	90	79.6	16	14.3	6	5.2	-	-	1	0.9	-	-
Convenient hours of service	88	77.9	14	12.3	8	7	2	1.8	1	0.9	-	-
Prompt re-shelving	92	81.5	13	11.5	6	5.2	2	1.8	-	-	-	-
Adequate photocopying facility	90	79.6	12	10.6	8	7	1	0.9	1	0.9	1	0.9
Adequate number of computers	90	79.6	14	12.4	6	5.2	2	1.8	-	-	1	0.9

Quiet and comfortable reading areas	90	79.6	15	13.5	7	6.	1	0.9	-	-	-	-
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The results offered in Table 4.3 indicate that, once again, the vast majority of respondents had high expectations with regard to the various statements relating to Library facility. The two statements which the respondents most agreed with were “A library that is conveniently located” and “A library has adequate light” with 94.7% and 93.8% of respondents respectively. The “least” agreement was with the statements “Convenient hours of service” and “Adequate photocopy service”, each indicated by a very still very high 90.2% of respondents

#### 4.3.1.4 General

The fourth category was a general one (see Question 2.4). It contained three statements which the respondents indicated their agreement or disagreement with. The results are presented in Table 2.4 below.

**Table 4.4: Users’ expectations – General**

**N=113**

<u>Statements</u>  The library:	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		No Response	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Provides me with all reading requirements	95	83.1	12	10.6	5	4.4	1	0.9	-	-	1	0.9
Satisfies my information needs	93	82.3	9	8	8	7	1	0.9	-	-	2	1.8
I am satisfied with the way I am treated in the library	94	83	13	11.5	4	3.5	1	0.9	-	-	1	0.9

The results show that an overwhelming majority of the respondent (94.5%) indicated that they expected to be treated well in the library. “Least” agreement was with the statement concerning the library satisfying respondents information needs (90.3%).

#### 4.3.1.5 Further comments about the services expected from the library

In the first of the open questions (Question 3), respondents were asked if they had any further comments to make concerning the services expected from the library. Nineteen respondents

answered providing a total of 20 responses (one respondent gave two comments). The responses are summarised in Table 3 below.

**Table 4.5: Comments about services expected from the library**

**N=19**

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Library should have enough/more reading material especially text books, IsiZulu books, newspapers and magazines	5
Library to provide more computers	4
Library that responds to my information needs	2
No further expectations – all is well	2
Schedule times to maximize computer usage	1
Opening hours need to accommodate people who are working.	1
Library carpets need to be cleaned	1
Less complicated labels on shelves	1
Staff to be more service orientated	1
Library and school need to work more closely together	1
Library needs to be better located	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>

As can be seen, the two most mentioned comments concerned the need for more reading materials (five respondents) and computers (four respondents) to be made available in the library. Reading materials mentioned were textbooks at school and tertiary level, newspapers and magazines, and books in isiZulu.

#### **4.3.2 Users' perceptions of service quality**

The statements in Question 2 referred to user expectations and the statements in Question 4 referred to user perceptions, that is, users' actual experiences of the services that the library was currently providing. As with Question 2, the respondents were asked to rate the statements (on a scale of 1 = Strongly agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Disagree and 5 = Strongly Disagree) by indicating the number that best described their perceptions of the quality of services provided by the library. The same categories and statements used under expectations were provided to the respondents. Tables 4.6 to 4.10 below provide the results relating to users' perceptions.



### 4.3.2.1 Staff services

Question 4.1 was asked to determine users' perceptions with regard to Staff services.

**Table 4.6: Users' perceptions of staff services**

**N=113**

<b>Statements</b> <b>The library</b> <b>currently</b> <b>provides</b>	<b>Strongly</b> <b>Agree</b>		<b>Agree</b>		<b>Neutral</b>		<b>Disagree</b>		<b>Strongly</b> <b>Disagree</b>		<b>No Response</b>	
	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
Staff who instil confidence in users	42	37.2	44	39.8	19	16.8	4	3.5	3	2.7	1	0.9
Staff who are consistently courteous	32	29.8	53	44.9	17	15.1	7	5.9	3	2.5	1	0.9
Staff who responds to users' questions	36	32.8	46	39.9	18	15.9	8	6.8	4	3.4	1	0.9
Staff who understands the needs of users	38	33.8	50	42.3	18	15.9	4	3.4	2	1.8	1	0.9
Staff who are willing to assist users	45	39.7	44	37.6	18	15.9	2	1.7	3	2.5	1	0.9
Staff who are knowledgeable to user related queries	35	31.3	52	45.4	17	15.1	8	6.8	-	-	1	0.9
Readers advisor to assist with reading request	37	33	47	41.3	17	15.1	9	7.6	2	1.7	1	0.9

The results in Table 4.6 show that while the majority of respondents were in agreement with the various statements relating to Staff services, percentages were generally lower (approximately 15% to 20%) than those concerning expectations. The statements receiving the most agreement (both strongly agree and agree) were "Library that provides staff who are willing to assist users" (77.3%) and "Staff who instil confidence in users" (77.2%). The "least" agreement was with the statements "Staff who responds to users' questions" (72%) and "Staff

who are consistently courteous” (73.2%). While there was a small minority of respondents who indicated their disagreement with the statements the number who did so was substantially more than respondents’ expectations concerning the statements. Thus, for example, there were 12 (11%) respondents who did not agree with the statement that staff respond to users’ questions, 11 (10%) not agreeing with being assisted by a reader’s advisor and 10 (9%) who disagreed with the statement “Staff who are consistently courteous”. Respondents who were not willing to commit themselves to either agreeing or disagreeing (were neutral) was also quite high – ranging between 15% and 17%.

#### ***4.3.2.1.1 Further comments about Staff services***

The second open question (Question 4.2) asked respondents to provide any further comments they might have concerning Staff services. Fifteen respondents answered the question. Just over half (eight) of the respondents expressed positive perceptions of library staff. These included staff being friendly, approachable, providing excellent service and willing to help. More negative perceptions of the staff were expressed by six respondents including staff not being helpful, needing training and being noisy. The final response did not concern staff per se but pointed to the need for more books on science and engineering.

#### **4.3.2.2 Access to information**

Question 4.3 was asked to determine users’ perceptions of Access to information. The results are presented in Table 4.2 below.

**Table 4.7: User’s perceptions of access to information**

N=113

<u>Statements</u>	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		No Response	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
The library currently provides:												
A comprehensive print collection	20	18.6	57	50	19	16.5	13	11.5	2	1.7	2	1.7
An adequate audio-visual collection	13	11	33	29.5	19	16.5	29	25.3	17	15	2	1.7
Access to Online Public Access Catalogue	26	23.7	54	47.7	18	16	5	4.2	7	5.9	3	2.5
An efficient inter-library loan services	16	15.3	42	37.3	38	33.1	11	9.3	3	2.5	3	2.5
An efficient reserve service	16	15.3	55	46.6	25	21	10	8.5	3	2.5	4	3.4
A comprehensive reference collection	32	28.8	60	52.5	14	12.6	2	1.7	-	-	5	4.2
Well placed signage for easy access to reading materials	16	15.3	57	50	29	25.3	6	5.1	1	0.8	4	3.4
Efficient internet access	55	48.1	41	36.8	9	7.6	5	4.2	-	-	4	3.4

There were quite large variations in terms of respondents agreeing or not with the various statements. Positively, 84.5% of respondents agreed with the library having “Efficient internet access” and 81.3% with it having “A comprehensive reference collection.” Significantly less agreement was expressed with “An adequate audio-visual collection” (40.5%) and “An efficient inter-library loans services” (52.6%). A third (33%) of respondents remained neutral with regard to the inter-library loans statement suggesting that they might not have been quite sure what such a service was.

#### ***4.3.2.2.1 Further comments about Access to information***

When asked if they had any further comment on Access to information (Question 4.4) 20 respondents replied giving a total of 27 responses. The responses are reflected in Table 5 below:

**Table 4.8: Comments about access to information**

**N=20**

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Need for an audio-visual collection	5
Internet access poor	5
Outdated/old material (books and CDs)	4
Library providing good services	3
ILL service not efficient	2
Need for tertiary books	1
Need for English newspapers	1
Need for more books in general	1
Need for a printer and photocopier	1
Need for more computers	1
Need for a reserve service	1
Need for library signage	1
Library signage clear and visible	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>

As reflected in Table 4.8 above, five respondents pointed to the need for an audio-visual collection (although one does exist) and the same number considered Internet access as poor. Four respondents considered material held by the library as outdated. Various library-related needs were pointed to – each by one respondent only.

#### **4.3.2.3 Library facility**

Question 4.4 was asked to determine users' perceptions with regard to library facilities. Findings are presented in Table 6.1 below.

**Table 4.9: Users' perceptions of library facility**

N=113

<u>Statements</u>  The library currently provides	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		No Response	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
	A library that is conveniently located	17	15	50	44.3	31	27.4	9	7.9	3	2.7	3
A library that is visually appealing	28	24.8	41	36.4	32	28.3	9	7.9	1	0.9	2	1.7
A library that has adequate light	75	66.5	31	27.5	1	0.9	3	2.5	1	0.9	2	1.7
Convenient hour of service	49	43.4	45	39.8	10	9.2	5	4.2	2	1.7	2	1.7
Prompt re-shelving	74	65.7	29	25.7	4	3.5	2	1.7	2	1.7	2	1.7
Adequate photocopying facility	73	64.8	29	25.7	5	4.4	2	1.7	1	0.9	3	2.5
Adequate number of computers	25	22.4	30	27.5	21	18.7	23	19.5	11	9.3	3	2.5
Quiet and comfortable reading areas	77	68.1	26	22.8	6	5.8	2	1.7	-	-	2	1.7

As can be seen in Table 4.9 above, there was substantial agreement between respondents with regard to the library having adequate light (93.8%). Substantially positive perceptions (all above 90% of respondents agreeing) were expressed concerning the library having a “Quiet and comfortable reading areas”, “Adequate photocopying facility” and “Prompt re-shelving” of materials. However, less than half (48.6%) of the respondents were in agreement with the library having an “Adequate number of computers”. In fact, 29% of the respondents expressed their disagreement in this regard, while 18.5% remained neutral and 2.5% did not respond. Also having low percentages of agreement were “A library that is conveniently located” (59.2%) and “A library that is visually appealing” (61.1%)

#### 4.3.2.3.1 Further comments about library facilities

When asked if they had any further comments regarding library facilities, 11 respondents commented. Too few computers were again pointed to (three respondents). The only other comment mentioned by more than one respondent was the lack of space in the library (two respondents). Issues raised by one respondent only were both positive and negative: study room being quiet allowing for effective thinking; library books too old; shelving of books could be improved; need for earlier opening and later closing hours on a Saturday; and carpets needing cleaning. Disconcertingly, one respondent mentioned that the library was lacking in all the points relating to it as a facility.

#### 4.3.2.4 General

Question 4.7 provided three general statements relating to the library and respondents were once again asked to indicate their agreement or not (in terms of their perceptions).

**Table 4.10: Users' perceptions – General**

N=113

<u>Statements</u>  The library	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		No Response	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Provides me with all reading requirements	37	32.7	47	41.7	18	16	6	5.3	2	1.8	3	2.6
Satisfies my information needs	31	27.5	58	51.5	11	9.7	9	8	1	0.9	3	2.6
I am satisfied with the way I am treated in the library	38	33.6	52	46	9	8	4	3.5	1	0.0	3	2.6

The results presented in Table 4.10 indicate that there was less than 10% disagreement with the three statements in the General category. All three statements received 74% or more agreement from the respondents and once again there were respondents who were not willing to commit themselves.

#### 4.3.2.4.1 Further comments about General aspects

Question 4.8 asked respondents if they had any further comments regarding the General category. Eleven responses were received with some, once again, echoing previous comments. The need for more books (tertiary, non-fiction, new and recent) was pointed to by six respondents. Three respondents were positive about the library (extremely good service, satisfied with the information, pleasant staff), one respondent asked for the network to be checked and the final respondent asked for the photocopier and printer to be repaired.

#### 4.4 User satisfaction

Question 5 had a number of sub-questions relating to the respondents' satisfaction (or not) with three categories of service quality, namely, Staff services, Access to information, and Library facility. Those respondents who expressed dissatisfaction were, in an open question, asked to elaborate. The findings to the three closed questions are summarised in Table 4.11 below. This is followed by the findings relating to the subsequent open questions in which respondents were asked to elaborate.

**Table 4.11: User satisfaction**

N=113

<u>Question</u>	Very satisfied		Satisfied		Neutral		Dissatisfied		Very Dissatisfied		No response	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
How satisfied are you with the level of service provided by the staff	31	27.4	59	52.2	17	15	3	2.7	1	0.9	2	1.8
How satisfied are you with access to information provided by the library	28	24.7	59	52.5	20	17.7	5	4.2	-	-	1	0.9
How satisfied are you with the library facilities mentioned earlier	30	26.5	52	46	23	20.4	5	4.4	-	-	3	2.7

The result shows that majority of the respondents, 90 (79.2%) were generally satisfied with the level of service provided by the staff, with access to information provided by the library 87 (77%) and with the library facilities, 82 (72.5%). The number of respondents who did not commit themselves (were neutral) was again, as with expectations and perceptions above, quite high.

#### **4.4.1 Elaboration by dissatisfied respondents**

As mentioned above, those respondents who were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the three aspects relating to quality were asked to elaborate. Interestingly, there were some respondents who were either neutral or satisfied that also provided an answer and these have been included in the analysis.

##### **4.4.1.1 Staff services**

Five valid responses were received relating to the level of service provided by the library staff. Two respondents mentioned that some of the staff are not always willing to help. Issues mentioned by one respondent each were: some of the staff not knowing their way around the library, the library service not catering for my needs, and the reserve service not being enough.

##### **4.4.1.2 Access to information**

Five respondents elaborated. Three respondents referred to old and outdated books in the library, one stated that the library did not meet his/her information needs, and the fifth referred to the very limited information found in the library.

##### **4.4.1.3 Library facility**

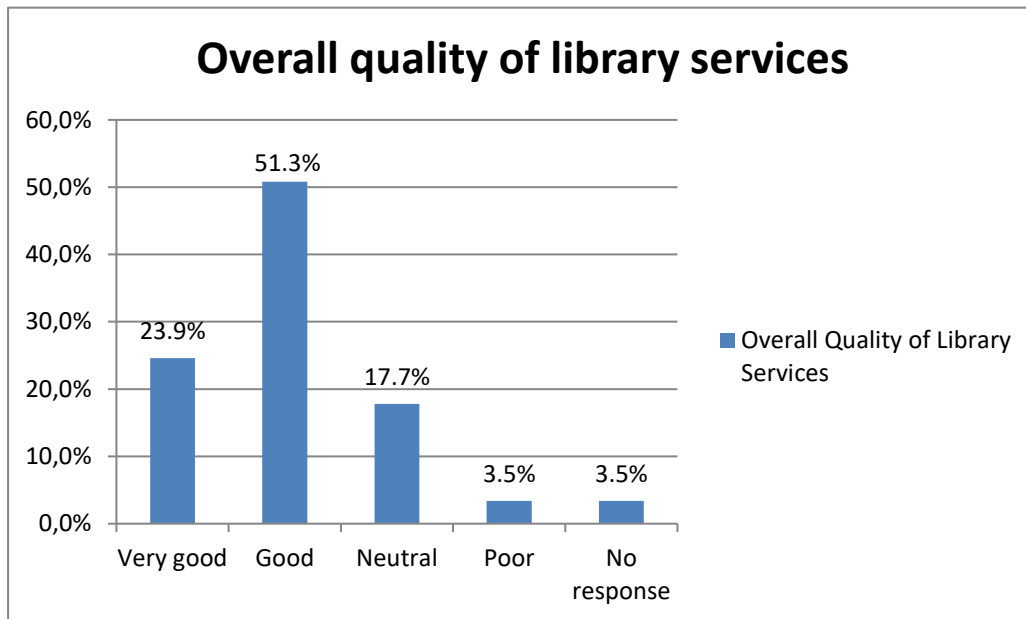
Six respondents elaborated. Three mentioned the limited number of computers available, one referred to outdated stock, one to the library itself being old and dilapidated, and one (which was off-topic) to the need for staff to take the library users more seriously.

#### **4.5 Rating of overall quality of services provided by the library**

In the penultimate question (Question 6), respondents were asked to rate the overall quality of the services provided by the library. The results are presented in Figure 4.6 below.



N=113



**Figure: 4.7 Overall quality of services provided by the library**

The results show that overall 58 (51.3%) respondents rated the quality of services provided by the library as good, 27 (23.9%) rated it as very good, while only four (3.5%) rated the services provided by the library as poor. Those respondents who were neutral numbered 20 (17.7%).

#### **4.6 Gap between expectations and perceptions**

As stated in Chapter 1 and in terms of the Gap theory underpinning the use of the LibQUAL + TM instrument, a key question of the study was determining the gaps or differences between what users expect to receive in terms of library services (expectations) and what they actually receive (perceptions). In calculating the gaps, Simba's (2006) approach was adopted: "The positive and negative responses, namely, strongly agree and agree, disagree and strongly disagree, are combined together respectively to form one positive (agree) and negative (disagree) response." Essentially, according to Ladhari and Morales (2008) in Naidu (2009: 126), "for each item, a so-called 'gap score' is calculated as the difference between the raw 'expectations score' and the raw 'perceptions score'". Simba (2006) states that the "reason for this is to enable easier tabulation, comparison and ensure clarity". By adopting this approach, the strengths and weaknesses of the existing library services could be determined.

The findings relating to the gaps for each of the statements (or items) in the four categories are reported below.

#### **4.6.1 Gap between expectations and perceptions – Staff services**

The first category of library services was that related to library staff. As can be seen in Table 4.12 below (and as noted above) the agree responses were combined as were the disagree responses. The differences (or gaps) between expectations and perceptions are reflected in the “Difference” column of the Table.

*Note:* As per Simba (2006) the percentages were calculated as the difference (or gap) divided by the sample size and expressed as a percentage.

**Table 4.12: Gap between users’ expectations and perceptions for staff services**

N=113

Staff services Statements	Expectations			Perceptions			Differences (Gaps)		
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Staff who instil confidence in users	107	2	4	86	19	8	21 (18.6%)	-17	-3
Staff who are consistently courteous	106	4	3	85	17	10	21 (18.6%)	-13	-7
Staff who respond to users’ questions	108	3	2	82	18	12	26 (23%)	-15	-10
Staff who understands the needs of users	107	3	2	88	18	6	19 (16.8%)	-15	-4
Staff who are willing to assist users	108	4	1	89	18	6	18 (15.9%)	-14	-5
Staff who are knowledgeable to user-related queries	104	7	2	87	17	8	17 (15%)	-10	-6
Readers advisor to assist with reading requests	106	5	2	84	17	11	19 (16.8%)	-12	-9
<b>Total</b>	<b>746</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>-96</b>	<b>-44</b>

Overall, and understandably, respondents’ expectations were higher than their perceptions across all statements in terms of agreement. While the size of the gap did not vary to any great extent, the three services with the largest gap between “agree” for expectations and perceptions were:

- Staff who respond to users’ questions, 26 (23%)
- Staff who instil confidence in users, 21 (18.6%)
- Staff who are consistently courteous, 21 (18.6%).

Also, as per Simba (2006) “The gap is considered significant if the difference is greater than 25%; and insignificant if it is less than 25%”. Thus, none of the percentages pertaining to agree in Table 4.12 above met the significant threshold but were nonetheless not far below it. This will be discussed in the following chapter.

#### 4.6.2 Gap between expectations and perceptions – Access to information

The second category of library services was Access to information. The differences between expectations on the one hand and perceptions on the other are reflected in Table 6.2 below.

**Table 4.13: Gap between users’ expectations and perceptions for access to information**

N=113

Access to information Statements	Expectations			Perceptions			Differences (Gaps)		
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
A comprehensive print collection	108	2	3	77	19	15	31 (27.4%)	-17	12
An adequate audio-visual collection	104	6	3	46	19	46	58 (51.3%)	-13	-43
Access to Online Public Access Catalogue	105	7	1	80	18	12	25 (22.1%)	-11	-11
An efficient inter-library loan services	106	4	3	58	38	14	48 (43.1%)	-35	-11
An efficient reserve service	105	5	3	71	25	13	34 (32.5%)	-20	-22
A comprehensive reference collection	105	5	3	92	9	5	13 (11.5%)	-4	-2
Well placed signage for easy access to reading material	102	8	3	73	29	7	29 (25.7%)	-21	-4
Efficient internet access	106	4	3	96	9	5	10 (8.8%)	-1	-2
<b>Total</b>	<b>841</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>593</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>-127</b>	<b>-82</b>

Again, respondents’ expectations exceed perceptions across all statements relating to Access to information; hence the positive numbers in the difference column relating to the agree

responses. However, the differences (or gaps) varied widely. Large or significant gaps were reflected for the following statements:

- An adequate audio-visual collection, 58 (51.3%)
- An efficient inter-library loan service, 51 (45.1%)
- An efficient reserve service, 39 (34.5%)
- A comprehensive print collection, 31 (27.4%).

#### **4.6.3 Gap between expectations and perceptions – Library facility**

The third category of library services was that related to library facilities. Table 4.14 below reflects the differences between expectations and perceptions with regard to each of the statements comprising this category. Once again, the difference in terms of agreement with regard to expectations and perceptions has also been reflected as a percentage.

**Table 4.14: Gap between expectations and perceptions for library facility**

N=113

Library facility Statements	Expectations			Perceptions			Differences (Gaps)		
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
A library that is conveniently located	107	5	1	67	31	12	40 (35.4%)	-26	-11
A library that is visually appealing	104	7	2	69	32	10	35 (31%)	-25	-8
A library that has adequate light	106	6	1	106	1	4	0	5	0
Convenient hours of services	102	8	3	94	10	7	8 (7.1%)	-2	-4
Prompt re-shelving	105	6	2	103	4	4	2 (1.8%)	6	-2
Adequate photocopying facility	102	8	2	102	5	3	0	3	-3
Adequate number of computers	104	6	2	55	21	34	49 (43.4%)	-15	-47
Quiet and comfortable reading areas	105	7	1	103	6	2	2 (1.8%)	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>835</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>699</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>-50</b>	<b>-47</b>

With two exceptions, respondents' expectations exceeded their perceptions with regard to Library facility. Statements that had a large (or significant) gap difference between agree for expectations and perceptions for Library facility were:

- Adequate number of computers, 49 (43.4%)
- A library that is conveniently located, 40 (35.4%)
- A library that is visually appealing, 35 (31%).

The two exceptions were the library having adequate lighting and adequate photocopying facilities with the same number of respondents (106 and 102 respectively) expressing agreement with regard to both expectations and perceptions.

#### 4.6.4 Gap between expectations and perceptions – General

The final category was a general one comprising three statements. The differences or gaps between expectations and perceptions are reflected in Table 4.15 below.

**Table 4.15: Gap between expectations and perceptions – General**

N=113

General Statements	Expectations			Perceptions			Differences (Gaps)		
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Provides me with all reading requirements	106	6	1	84	18	8	22 (19.5%)	-12	-7
Satisfies my information needs	102	8	1	89	11	10	13 (11.5%)	-3	-9
I am satisfied with the way I am treated in the library	107	4	1	90	9	4	17 (15%)	-5	-3
<b>Total</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>-21</b>	<b>-19</b>

As with all the previous categories expectations, for the most part (see the point concerning exceptions above), exceeded perceptions in terms of agreement with the various statements put forward. As a result, the differences (for the most part) were a positive number. As can be seen in Table 4.15 above, none of the differences were significant with all coming in at under 20%.

#### 4.7 Summary

In this chapter, data was analysed, response rate reported and the findings of the study were presented. Findings were presented in the form of figures, tables and text. The order of presentation followed, in the main, the order of the questions in the research instrument (questionnaire). Thus, findings relating to the demographic details of the respondents were presented first. This was followed by respondents' library usage patterns and their expectations with regard to the various categories of library services. Perceptions of the respondents were then presented as well as findings relating to their satisfaction (or not) with the library services. The chapter ended with the presentation of the findings in relation to the gaps between

expectations and perceptions. Findings from the open questions were interspersed at appropriate points with the quantitative results.

The interpretation and discussion of these results can be found in Chapter 5 which follows.



## **Chapter 5 – Discussion of results**

### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the findings of the study in light of the research problem, objectives, key questions asked and the reviewed literature. The purpose of the study was to determine users' perceptions of library services provided by the Nongoma Public Library (NPL) and their level of satisfaction regarding the services delivered. In doing so the strengths and weaknesses of the various services provided could be identified and responded to. The key questions of the study were:

- What are the users' expectations of the services provided by the NPL?
- What are the users' perceptions of the services provided by the library?
- What are the gaps between user expectations and perceptions?
- What does the library need to do to meet the needs of its users?

This chapter discusses the information gathered from the self-administered questionnaire that was presented in the previous chapter. The different aspects which comprised library services were grouped into four categories. These categories were Staff services, Access to information, Library facility and General. Each category is discussed in light of the research questions. The gap between users' expectations and perceptions (the third research question) was a crucial consideration. As noted in the previous chapter, the gap is considered significant if the difference is greater than 25%, and insignificant if it is less than 25% (Simba 2006) and this was borne in mind in the discussion which follows. Also discussed are the levels of satisfaction of the users with the various services. The chapter ends with a brief reflection on the use of the LibQUAL+™ survey instrument that was used in this study. As has been pointed out, the vast majority of studies using the instrument took place in an academic and research library setting, with only one local study (Bhim 2010) applying it to the public library context.

To begin with, the demographic characteristics and the library use patterns of the respondents are discussed.

## **5.1 Demographic profile of respondents**

This section discusses the profile of the respondents with regards to their demographic attributes, namely gender, age and race group.

### **5.1.1 Gender, age and race group**

A majority of the respondents, 62 (52.5%) were female and 51 (43.2%) were male reflecting, to a certain extent, the female to male ratio of the total adult membership of the NPL. The highest number of respondents were those between the age of 30 to 39 years, that is 46 (40.7%) followed by those between 18 to 29 years, 38 (32.2%). There were only eight (6.8%) respondents over the age of 50 years. Thus, the majority of respondents were relatively young being between 18 and 39 years old. In terms of race, the vast majority of respondents, 109 (92.4%) described themselves as African. The remaining nine (7.6%) respondents did not categorise themselves. The findings were not unexpected as the NPL is located in a rural area and the Nongoma community is comprised largely of Africans with very few other race groups.

## **5.2 Library usage patterns**

This section discusses the findings related to the frequency of library visits, the usage of library resources and the frequency of access to library electronic resources.

### **5.2.1 Frequency of library visits**

It was pleasing to note that library usage, as reflected in visits to the library, was good. As indicated in Figure 4.4 the vast majority of respondents (101; 89.4%) visited the library at least once a month or more. A substantial minority of these respondents (48; 42.4%) stated that they visit the library daily. These findings compare favourably to those of Bhim (2010) who found that 85.7% of her respondents visited the library at least once every two weeks. However, it must be borne in mind that Bhim's study was of a large, centrally situated, urban library.

As noted in the previous chapter it could be assumed that a number of the respondents using the library on a daily basis were students studying through tertiary distance learning institutions such as the UNISA as they cannot easily access their institutions' libraries. Importantly, the high percentage of respondents using the library suggests that they were well-placed to answer the questions concerning the services provided by the library.

### **5.2.2 Frequency of use of library resources**

When asked how often the various resources were used, a substantial number, 104 which counts for (91.5%) of respondents indicated that they used the resources once a month or more and of those, 41 (36.4%) used the various resources every day. Again, this is a pleasing finding indicating that the library is not simply used as a place to study but that the resources provided by the library (books, encyclopaedias, newspapers and the like) are actually used. The findings also suggest that the library users are dependent on the library for information and that the library and its resources play a significant role in their lives.

### **5.2.3 Frequency of access to electronic resources in the library**

Access to information in digital format is becoming increasingly important in this technological age. Findings revealed that 42 (37.2%) of the respondents accessed electronic resources (such as the Internet) in the library every day followed by 22 (19.5%) who accessed the resources once a week. Of some concern was the 12 (10.6%) respondents who indicated that they never accessed the electronic resources in the library. While reason/s for them not doing so were not ascertained, it must be remembered that Nongoma is a rural community and that there would be many in the community (and some who visit the library) who are not computer literate.

These results showed that NPL plays a significant role in providing electronic library resources to people who probably otherwise would not have been able to access electronic resources elsewhere. Therefore, the library plays a pivotal role in the community by providing resources to those who are less privileged and those that could be marginalised for various reasons. As Bhim (2010: 84) in her study pointed out, “By providing access to electronic resources, the public library can play a vital role in bridging the information gap caused by the digital divide.”

## **5.3 Staff services**

Questions 2 and 4 in the questionnaire listed various statements concerning the quality of the services provided by the NPL and respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the statements in terms of their expectations (Question 2) and, subsequently, their perceptions (Question 4). As noted, the statements were placed in four categories, the first of which was the library staff (Staff services) and it is this category which is now discussed.

The public library plays a pivotal role in the community it serves and therefore requires staff that are competent and knowledgeable. A public library needs staff that are passionate about their users and who are dedicated and willing to provide services that meet their users' needs, especially those who visit the library regularly. High customer care is a mandatory for library staff when addressing the information needs of library users. According to Bhim (2010), a high standard of customer care should be an integral part of all policies and procedures of a library. Thus, library staff are expected to provide services of high quality to the community they serve. Library users, in turn, expect library staff that are always professional and dedicated towards them. It is, therefore, very important for library staff to be committed and always willing to assist and give of their time when helping users.

As was done for the presentation of the findings in the previous chapter, for the purposes of this discussion, the responses for strongly agree and agree were combined as were those for disagree and strongly disagree.

### **5.3.1 Discussion of results from the closed questions on Staff services**

The overwhelming majority of respondents had, perhaps understandably, high expectations (that is, what they expect from staff) with regard to the various statements relating to Staff services. While all the statements had extremely high percentages of agreement (both agree and strongly agree) the two with the highest percentages were "Staff who respond to users' questions" and "Staff who are willing to assist users" – both having 95.6% of respondents in agreement. Both could be considered essential "requirements" of library staff and link in strongly with the need for a high standard of customer care pointed to above. The "least" agreement was with the statement "Staff who are knowledgeable to user queries" indicated by a still very high 92% of respondents. As noted in the previous chapter, there were some respondents, albeit a very small minority, who disagreed with the statements, but these respondents were generally less than those respondents who remained neutral.

In terms of how the respondents actually perceived the Staff services (their perceptions) the majority of respondents, as with expectations, were in agreement with the various statements relating to these services. However, the percentages were generally lower (approximately 15% to 20%) than those concerning expectations. This is understandable as the expectations refer to the ideal while perceptions are concerned with the "reality", how things are actually perceived by respondents. The two statements receiving the most agreement (both strongly agree and

agree) were “Library that provides staff who are willing to assist users” (77%) and “Staff who instil confidence in users” (77.3%). The first underscores the importance of staff being readily available and willing to assist users while the second points to the importance of how staff goes about doing so, their attitude toward the users.

As noted in the findings in the previous chapter, there was a small minority of respondents who indicated their disagreement with the statements. However, what is of some concern is that the number who did so was substantially more than respondents’ expectations concerning the statements. Thus, for example, there were 12 (11%) respondents who did not agree with the statement that staff respond to users’ questions, 11 (10%) not agreeing with being assisted by a reader’s advisor and 10 (9%) who disagreed with the statement “Staff who are consistently courteous”. These negative ratings need to be taken note of by library management. Also of concern was the quite high percentage of respondents who were not willing to commit themselves to either agreeing or disagreeing (were neutral) – ranging between 15% and 17%. It could be argued that these respondents, rather than expressing a critical or negative response (that is, not agreeing), remained neutral.

### **5.3.2 Gap difference on Staff services**

The findings (and the discussion above) showed that the adult users of the NPL who participated in the study had very high expectations of the library staff. Their actual perceptions of Staff services, while high, were lower. However, the gap (or difference) between the two when expressed as a percentage, did not meet the threshold of 25% or more to be considered significant. Nonetheless, there were two statements which could be viewed as being fairly close to the threshold, namely “Staff who respond to users’ questions” (23%) and “Staff who are consistently courteous” (18.6%). As noted, these two statements were mentioned above in relation to disagreement and cognisance of this need to be taken by library management.

### **5.3.3 Discussion of results of open question on Staff services**

Responses to the specific open question concerning Staff services (Question 4.2) were limited in number. Interestingly, just under half of the responses provided were negative in nature. Thus, while eight respondents expressed positive comments relating to (including staff being friendly, approachable, providing excellent service and willing to help) six respondents made

negative comments (including staff not being helpful, needing training and being noisy). In terms of the latter, one respondent stated the following:

*Some staff are not willing to help, usually fight with library users. I find some of the staff very unprofessional and know nothing about the library yet they are there to assist users.*

Statements such as this, while clearly not reflective of the respondents as a whole, are of concern. As Crowley and Gilreath (2002) in Bhim (2010) point out, the attitude of library staff in terms of friendliness, helpfulness and willingness to assist is critical in satisfying users' needs. Negative comments relating to the staff also emerged elsewhere in the responses. For example, two of the four respondents who expressed dissatisfaction with services provided by the library staff mentioned that staff were not always willing to assist users and one mentioned that staff did not know their way around the library. In response to Question 3 which asked whether respondents had any further comments to make regarding library services, one felt that the staff needed to be more service-oriented. Similar findings relating to staff were noted by Bhim (2010) in her study of the Bessie Head Library in Pietermaritzburg. She stated that the comments from library users showed the need for courteous, professional and approachable staff. Similar sentiments were expressed by users of an academic library. In this regard, Naidu (2009) quoted one student who stated that "Staff need to be friendly and welcoming and staff need to be approachable when students seek help."

Again, it needs to be stressed that negative comments concerning Staff services were very much in a minority and generally, the respondents had few concerns relating to this category (as the gap findings attest). However, it is evident, given the discussion above, that consideration could be given to periodic training of library staff on aspects such as "customer care" and the need for staff to have a service ethic. This would be important for new members of staff in particular. Consideration could also be given to identifying those staff who need to improve their skills in terms of the fundamentals of public library work and provide them with the necessary training. Gill (2009) in Bhim (2010) does remind one that regular staff training in customer care should always be based on the assumption that it must be primarily for the benefits of the users rather than the convenience of the staff and the organisation.

## **5.4 Access to information**

According to Gill (2009) libraries are made up of collections of information and cultural materials in a variety of formats including access to resources from other libraries. Access to information for this study comprised eight statements relating to the library collection (for example, the reference collection) including associated services (for example, inter-library loans). If some of these aspects or services are not available in the library then the library is failing its users in terms of providing access to information. Bhim (2010) makes the important point that a large collection does not necessarily equate with a good collection and that the key criterion must be the relevance and the currency of material provided in the library.

The purpose of the public library is to provide information services to meet the needs of the public. This purpose cannot be fulfilled if the resources and information required are not accessible to users and if they are old and outdated. Bhim (2010) stated that a balanced library collection plays a significant role in terms of service quality in a public library. In a similar vein, Naidu (2009) stated that the library collection plays a vital role in support of the institution's mission and vision. Gill (2009) argued that new materials can be lost if introduced into old and outdated stock and organising access to materials in the library is vital for collection development.

Nitecki and Hernon (2000) pointed to how library quality can be defined in terms of collection size, titles held and breadth of subject coverage. Similarly, Majid, Anwar and Eisenshitz (2001) (in Naidu 2009) indicated that factors such as size, relevance and currency of collections can also be used to measure the effectiveness of a library. According to Bhim (2010) concepts of quality and effectiveness are interrelated and quality plays a significant role in determining whether an effective service is provided or not.

### **5.4.1 Discussion of closed questions relating to Access to information**

As with the previous category, the vast majority of respondents had very high expectations (that is, what they expect from the library in terms of access to information) with regard to various aspect or statements comprising this category. Although all the statements had very high percentages of agreement (both agree and strongly agree) the three with the highest percentages were "A comprehensive print collection" with 95.5%, "An efficient inter-library loan service" (93.8%) and "Efficient internet access" (93.8%). These statements could be

considered as important “requirements” for access to information. The “least” agreement was with the statement “Well-placed signage for easy access to reading material” indicated by a still very high 90.2% of respondents. As with the first category (Staff services), there was a small minority of respondents who inexplicably disagreed with the statements.

Respondents actual perceptions of the various aspects or statements relating to Access to information were, again understandably, lower than their expectations and at times, significantly lower. The two statements receiving the most agreement (both agree and strongly agree) were “Efficient internet access” (84.8% of respondents) and “A comprehensive reference collection” (81.3%). The first stresses the importance of access to the Internet while the second illustrates the importance of an adequate reference collection in the library. Interestingly, the latter would be in “hard copy” pointing to the continuing relevance of print-based information resources in the public library.

However, as will be reflected in the gap differences below, there were a number of respondents who did not agree with some of the statements. For example, 46 (40.3%) respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that the library currently provides “An adequate audio-visual collection”. Much less (but still of concern) were the 15 (13.2%) respondents did not agree with the statement concerning the library providing “A comprehensive print collection” and 14 (12.4%) who were not in agreement with the view that the library provided “An efficient inter-library loan service.” These negative responses need to be noted by library management. Again, there was quite a high percentage (ranging from seven per cent to 25%) of respondents who did not want to commit themselves into either agreeing or disagreeing (those that were neutral). Once again, it could be argued that these respondents, rather than expressing a critical or negative response (that is not agreeing), chose to remain neutral.

#### **5.4.2 Gap difference on Access to information**

Given the findings above, it is not surprising that there were gap differences (expectations minus perceptions) with some of the statements that exceeded the 25% threshold and thus could be considered significant. Statements that were substantially over the threshold were “An adequate audio-visual collection” (40.5% of respondents) and “An efficient inter-library loan service (52.6%). Smaller, but still significant gaps were “An efficient reserve service” (34.5%) and “A comprehensive print collection” (27.4%). These statements, reflecting significant gaps,



indicate that access to information in the library is being compromised and that action does need to be taken to reduce or ideally, eliminate the gaps.

#### **5.4.3 Discussion of open questions relating to Access to information**

Various open questions touched on the issue of Access to information. The majority of the responses received were negative in nature, pointing to some shortcomings of the library and its collection. Supporting the findings relating to the gaps above, were five respondents who stated that there was a need for an audio-visual collection while the same number (five) considered access to the Internet as poor. Four respondents referred to the outdated or old collection one of which said:

*The library has old and outdated materials (books and CDs) therefore it does not cater to my needs.*

Similarly, three of the five respondents who expressed dissatisfaction with Access to information mentioned, when asked to elaborate, outdated and old books in the library. Five respondents, when asked for further comments regarding library services stated that the library should have enough/more reading material. While the responses are not necessarily reflective of all the respondents, they together with the need for a comprehensive print collection, point to the limitations of the current book stock. Although the library does its materials exchange on a quarterly basis new material tends to get lost because such material gets interfiled with old material in the library. Gill (2009) argued that new materials can be lost if introduced into old and outdated stock and organising access to materials both in the library and beyond is vital for collection development. A more fundamental reason accounting for the outdated/old collection of books (and indeed the lack of an adequate audio-visual collection) is a financial one – the management is not able to provide the library with a budget for the purchase of new books. One can also point to the limited number of new books provided by the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) during its material exchanges. Furthermore, the DAC does not liaise with the library when purchasing new books with the result that books, while new, are often irrelevant. It is evident that issues related to the development of the collection need to be addressed by the NPL. In this regard, an information needs assessment could be considered to start with.

While the percentage gap or difference with regard to “Efficient internet access” was well within the threshold (8.8%), cognisance needs to be taken of the five respondents above who mentioned poor Internet access. There are moves internationally to make Internet access a basic human right (Nield 2019) and its importance, not only in terms of information but as a means of communication, cannot be underestimated. Respondents in Bhim’s (2010) study found that Internet access was too slow and Ncwane (2016) in his study noted that “Internet problems” were frequently mentioned ones on the part of the students. Ncwane (2016) argued that access to information is one of the contributing factors for users to be satisfied with the services of the library and this necessitates reliable access to the Internet.

Also, it needs to be emphasised that the negative comments concerning library services were enough to raise a concern for library management and needs timeous intervention because this clearly shows that the library is not meeting the needs of all the users in terms of the library collection and access to information. Given the above discussion, it is evident that there are shortcomings with regard to certain aspects of Access to information that library management needs to address to ensure that they are more in line with the expectations of the users. However, it must be acknowledged that there were positive responses to some of the open-ended questions. For example, three of the respondents were of the opinion that they were getting good services from the library while two had *No further expectations – all [was] well.*

## **5.5 Library facility**

Public libraries are expected to provide the space for studying, meetings, discussions and other activities involving knowledge sharing. According to Bhim (2010), library buildings play an important part in public library service provision. The library plays a crucial role in satisfying users’ needs by providing a space and appropriate facilities to its users. The IFLA/UNESCO (2001) states that libraries should be designed to reflect the functions of the library service, be accessible to all in the community and be sufficiently flexible to accommodate new and changing services. Library users do not only expect to obtain relevant information resources but also expect good facilities. Bhim (2010) posits that the absence of such facilities would be an indication of a library that is not adequately equipped to assist users with their relevant needs. In this study Library facility comprised eight aspects ranging from “A library that is conveniently located” to one which has “Quiet and comfortable reading areas”. According to Bhim (2010), the provision of enough and reliable equipment should facilitate easy and

efficient access to information. The facilities mentioned in the questionnaire were expected to be available and in good working order to accommodate the users of the NPL. The discussion of the closed questions on this category follows below.

### **5.5.1 Discussion of the results of closed questions on Library facility**

The overwhelming majority of the respondents had again, perhaps understandably, high expectations (that is what they expect in terms of facilities) with regards to various statements relating to Library facility. While all the statements had extremely high percentages of agreement (both strongly agree and agree), the two with the highest percentages were “A library that is conveniently located” (94.7%) and “A library that has adequate light” (93.8%). Both could be considered to be essential “requirements” of a library and link in strongly with the accessibility and usability of the library. The “least” agreement was with the statements “Convenient hours of service” and “Adequate photocopying facility” with both a still very high 90.2% agreement. As mentioned with the previous categories, there was a very small minority of respondents who disagreed with the statements.

In terms of how the respondents actually perceived the library facilities (their perceptions), three statements received substantially lower levels of agreement. These were an “Adequate number of computers” (48.6%), “A library that is visually appealing” (60.8%) and “A library that is conveniently located” (59.3%). While nothing can be done regarding the location of the library, library management does, in particular, need to give attention to the perception held by many respondents that there is not an adequate number of computers available. Attention clearly also needs to be given to making the library more visually appealing. Statements receiving substantially positive perceptions (above 90%) were “A library that has adequate light”, “Prompt re-shelving”, “Quiet and comfortable reading areas” and “Adequate photocopying”. All underscore the usability of the library and point to the library having an accommodating environment with regard to reading (and presumably study). The statement “Convenient hours of service” was less supported with 83.2% of respondents being in agreement. A relatively high percentage of neutral responses were given for “A library that is conveniently located” and “A library that is visually appealing”, namely, 27.4% and 28.3% of respondents respectively.

### **5.5.2 Gap difference on library facility**

In the discussion above, there were three statements which had substantially lower levels of agreement in terms of perceptions. It is thus not surprising that the same three statements reflected the largest gap scores. The statements and gap scores were as follows: “Adequate number of computers” (43.4%), “A library that is conveniently located” (35.4%) and “A library that is visually appealing” (31%). All three gap scores are above the 25% threshold and therefore significant. They also indicate that the library has not met the needs of many of the respondents in terms of providing sufficient and well-maintained library facilities. As discussed above, there is little that can be done in terms of the location of the library. However, something can be done with regard to the appearance of the library and the number of computers available. These are clearly issues which need to be addressed by library management. With regard to the other statements comprising Library facility the gaps were relatively small indicating little difference between expectations and perceptions. In fact, there were two instances where the gap was zero, reflecting a match between expectations and perceptions. These were the library having adequate lighting and adequate photocopying facilities.

### **5.5.3 Discussion of the results of open questions on library facility**

Responses to the various open questions concerning Library facility were, as with the other categories, limited in number and, also as with the other categories, were in the main negative in nature. Linking in with the gaps above, when asked if they had any further comments regarding library facilities, insufficient computers was the most-mentioned response (three respondents). The only other response given by more than one respondent was the lack of space in the library mentioned by two respondents. When asked to comment on further services expected from the library, the need for more computers was pointed to by four respondents; and when respondents who indicated dissatisfaction with library facilities were asked to elaborate, three of the six who did so also mentioned the lack of computers.

“Convenient hours of services” was one of the statements under the Library facility category and while not reflecting a significant gap (7.1%) does warrant some discussion. In response to one of the open questions, a respondent replied as follows:

*The library opens too late and closes too early especially on Saturdays, making it very difficult for library users who are not available during the week to access the library.*

Statements such as this, while not indicative of the respondents as a whole, are a concern. Bhim (2010) in her study conducted at the Bessie Head Library mentioned that respondents expressed a need for an extension of the opening and closing times of the library. It is evident that a number of the adult library users in Nongoma are students studying part-time and the adjustment of opening and closing hours to make them more convenient could be considered by library management and the municipality. This, of course, would have safety implications should the library be closing in the dark during winter.

It has to be emphasised that the respondents had few concerns relating to Library facility (as the gap findings attest). However, it is apparent given the discussion above, that consideration must be given to adding more computers in the library. This would be important for library users since many come to the library to utilise computers and to access the Internet. Improving the appearance of the library is something which consideration also needs to be given, as well as to more convenient operating hours.

## **5.6 General**

The fourth and final category was a general one containing three statements concerning the library providing for users' reading requirements, meeting their information needs and treating them in a satisfactory manner. The public library is expected to render services to its users by providing easy access to information and resources. It plays a huge role in fulfilling its obligation by providing a service that strives to meet users' expectations and also satisfy their needs. Bhim (2010) states that to be successful in fulfilling its goals the public library must be fully accessible to all its potential users. Any limitation of access will reduce the ability of the public library to fully achieve its primary role of meeting the library and information needs of the community it serves (IFLA/UNESCO 2001).

### **5.6.1 Discussion of closed questions under General**

The results once again (as with previous categories) revealed that the respondents had high expectations regarding the statements. For example, 106 (93.8%) respondents agreed that they expected the library to provide them with all their reading requirements and 107 (94.7%) expected to be satisfied with the way they are treated while at the library.

The perceptions of the services in this category varied to a small extent and were, once again, lower than the users' expectations. The differences were unremarkable and will not be discussed.

### **5.6.2 Gap difference on General**

All the gap scores relating to the statements in this General category were under 20% and thus below the threshold set for them to be classed as significant. Interestingly, the biggest gap, that of 19.5%, concerned the library providing the respondents with all their reading requirements. This does to a certain extent give further support to the need for more and less outdated books in the library.

### **5.6.3 Discussion of results of open question on General category**

When asked if they had any further comments regarding the General category, 11 responses were received. Six of the 11 responses reflected the statement dealing with the library providing for respondents' reading requirements. The need for more tertiary and non-fiction books was mentioned as well as the need for more "new" and "recent" books. Three comments were of a positive nature and concerned treatment by staff – extremely good service and pleasant staff. The third response reflected satisfaction with the information provided by the library.

## **5.7 User satisfaction**

This section addresses the users' level of satisfaction with Staff services, Access to information and Library facility as well as their rating of the overall quality of the services provided by the library.

D'elia and Walsh (1983) in Bhim (2010) stated that user satisfaction has been used primarily to describe a library's level of performance with regard to the services it provides. The library that provides its users with expected services is the library that actually meets its users' needs. Ncwane (2016) argued that the higher the user satisfaction, arguably the higher the level of performance of the library services. According to Chua, Mentol and Kau (2004), there is a strong correlation between the concept of service quality and satisfaction. For the library to satisfy its users it has to fulfil their needs and this can only be done if the library provides its users with a quality service. According to Cullen (2001), the library needs to compete both in terms of service quality and customer satisfaction.

### **5.7.1 User satisfaction with Staff services, Access to information and Library facility**

The users of the NPL who participated in the study were, in the main, satisfied with all three aspects of the library mentioned above. The percentages of those who were satisfied (including those who were very satisfied) ranged from 79.2% regarding Staff services, 77% regarding Access to information and 72.5% with regard to Library facility. Dissatisfied respondents were in a very small minority being less than five per cent across all three aspects. This situation could well have changed if the respondents who did not commit themselves had done so and reflected a dissatisfied response. It is acknowledged that those respondents who remained neutral (as high as 20% regarding Library facility) could have been satisfied. However, this is unlikely and rather than providing a negative response expressing their dissatisfaction they remained neutral. Given this, one could argue that there is room for improvement in terms of raising the satisfaction level of the users by improving the quality of the services provided and this is supported to some extent by the discussion of other findings in this chapter.

### **5.7.2 Rating of overall quality of services provided by the library**

In line with the respondents' overall satisfaction with the various aspect of the library outlined above, the findings regarding their rating of the overall quality of services provided by the library were equally positive – 75.2% rating the overall quality as either good or very good. Those rating the overall services as poor were in a small minority (3.5%) and those remaining neutral again relatively high (17.7%).

The results described and discussed above have shown that the library is to a large extent excelling in the provision of services rendered and that users are, in the main, satisfied with the services provided. However, it is also evident that there is room for improvement and that the library management and staff cannot be complacent.

## **5.8 An assessment of the LibQUAL+™ instrument**

The survey method was used in this study. The questionnaire, adapted from LibQUAL+™ instrument was used to collect data from the respondents.

The questionnaire was successful in obtaining users' expectations and perceptions regarding various aspects of the services provided by the NPL. It was also successful at identifying the levels of user satisfaction regarding the quality of the service. The results from the study have

shown that very few respondents answered the open questions. However, those who did answer provided some interesting and valid comments for library improvement. The study allowed for the successful interpretation of the responses in a methodical manner. The appropriate design of the research instrument allowed for determining the gap between users' expectations of service quality and their perceptions of the actual services delivered by the Library. This provided a means to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the NPL with the intention of building on the strengths and addressing the weaknesses identified. The goal is not only to meet the expectations of library users but to exceed them. This, clearly, still needs to be done. The data, in conclusion, could be considered adequate in terms of answering the research questions asked.

## **5.9 Summary**

This chapter presented and discussed the respondents' demographic information and their library usage patterns. The main thrust of the chapter, however, was to identify and discuss the users' expectations and perceptions of library service quality as well as the gap or difference between the two. User comments on the various service categories were discussed at appropriate times. The chapter ended with a brief highlighting and discussion of the respondents' levels of satisfaction with Staff services, Access to information and Library facility and their rating of the overall quality of the service. Finally, the use of the LibQUAL+™ instrument was discussed.

Chapter 6, the final chapter, follows. It provides a brief summary of the thesis, the main findings, conclusions and recommendations and ends with some suggestions for further research.



# **Chapter 6 - Main findings, conclusions and recommendations**

## **6.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study based on the data analysed and presented in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 5. Suggestions for further research are also provided.

As outlined in Chapter 1 the broad objective of the study was to determine whether the services provided by the Nongoma Public Library (NPL) met the needs of its adult library users. In order to accomplish this objective, the following key questions were asked:

- What are the users' expectations of the services provided by the NPL?
- What are the users' perceptions of the services provided by the library?
- What are the gaps between users' expectations and perceptions?
- What does the library need to do to meet the needs of its users?

Also as noted in the first chapter, it was anticipated that the study would show both the weakness of the library (where it needs to improve) and also its strengths (areas where the library can further excel). The findings of the study would thus assist the library staff to rectify the problems and build on the strengths in terms of service delivery to the users.

The chapter begins with a brief summary of the thesis.

## **6.1 Summary of thesis**

Chapter 1 of the thesis provided an introduction to the study. It presented the background to the study, the research problem, the rationale of the study, the study objectives and the key questions asked. The delimitation of the study and definitions of relevant terms used were also provided. The theoretical perspective underpinning the study was briefly introduced and, importantly, the context of the study was described, that is, the Nongoma Municipality.

Chapter 2 comprised the literature review. An overview of the NPL was given. This was followed by a brief discussion of the role of public libraries in a democratic SA. Concepts introduced in Chapter 1 were elaborated on as was the use of the SERVQUAL and LibQUAL+TM instruments. The chapter ended with an overview of the research conducted

with the instruments. It was noted that the majority of the studies concerned the academic and research library.

Chapter 3 presented the research methodology used in the study. This included the description of the research design, population, sampling technique and sample size, data collection instrument and procedures adopted. Also discussed in the chapter were the validity and reliability of the instrument used and the ethical issues involved in conducting the study.

Chapter 4 comprised the results of the study. Data collected from the adult users of the NPL were analysed and presented in the form of tables, figures and text.

Chapter 5 discussed the findings presented in the previous chapter. This was done, where appropriate, in the light of the relevant literature. The chapter ended with a brief assessment of the LibQUAL+™ instrument used to collect the data.

## **6.2 Main findings and conclusions**

In this section, the main findings of the study are highlighted and the conclusions stemming from these findings are presented. The key questions underpinning the study provide the framework for the presentation. To begin with, however, the main findings relating to the demographics of the sample of adult users and the usage of the library are presented.

### **6.2.1 Demographics and usage of the NPL**

In terms of gender, a small majority (53%) of respondents were female. The majority (73%) of respondents were between 18 and 39 years old and thus relatively young. The vast majority (92%) regarded themselves as African. In terms of frequency of library visits a large majority (89%) visited the library at least once a month or more while a significant minority (42%) visited the library on a daily basis. The frequency of use of library resources was equally high with 92% using the resources once a month and 36% using the resources every day. With regards to accessing electronic resources more than half (57%) did so on either a daily or weekly basis.

Given the above, it can be concluded that the respondents, in terms of gender, largely reflected that of the library membership as a whole and, in terms of age and particularly race, mainly homogenous. Their frequency of library visits and their use of the library resources including

electronic resources can be described as good. This suggests that the respondents, in the main, were in a good position to provide informed responses to the questions posed concerning their expectations and perceptions of the services provided by the NPL.

### **6.2.2 What are the users' expectations of the services provided by the NPL? (Key question 1)**

The respondents (adult library users) were presented with four categories of library services, namely, Staff services, Access to information, Library facility and General. Each of the categories contained a series of statements to which the respondents had to indicate their agreement or disagreement. There was a neutral category for respondents who did not want to commit themselves either way.

Expectations, that is, what respondents personally want or expect of the library in terms of services, were extremely high (agreement from 90% to 95.6%) across all categories. Given this, not one category or statement "stood out".

It can thus be concluded that respondents' expectations concerning the services provided by the NPL were high. This is understandable given that expectations are the ideal. They are also, however, targets toward which the library needs to strive and, again ideally, meet. Users have expectations concerning the library and while they may, at times, be considered unrealistic, they remain the yardstick against which libraries need to measure themselves.

### **6.2.3 What are the users' perceptions of the services provided by the NPL? (Key question 2)**

Respondents' perceptions (that is their actual experiences of the services provided by the library) were, in the main, high. However, they were, also in the main, lower than expectations – in most instances between 10% and 20% lower and, in some cases, even lower than 20%.

Statements under Staff services which received negative ratings (that is, disagreement) from nine per cent or more of respondents were "Staff who responds to users' questions" (11%), "Readers advisor to assist with reading request" (10%) "Staff who are consistently courteous" (9%). While these percentages (negative ratings) are relatively low, they should be a cause for concern for the library and do suggest that there may well be a "problem" with regard to the staff. Also of concern, as mentioned in the previous chapter, was the quite high percentage of

respondents who were not willing to commit themselves to either agreeing or disagreeing (were neutral) – ranging between 15% and 17%. As noted, it could be argued that these respondents, rather than expressing a critical or negative response (that is, not agreeing), remained neutral.

A statement under the category Access to information which had a fairly substantial number of respondents disagreeing was the library currently providing “An adequate audio-visual collection” – 46 (40.7%) of the respondents doing so. Much less (but still of concern) were the 15 (13.3%) respondents who did not agree with the statement concerning the library providing “A comprehensive print collection” and the 14 (12.4%) who were not in agreement with the view that the library provided “An efficient inter-library loan service.” Finally, statements under Library facility which had a noteworthy number of respondents disagreeing were an “Adequate number of computers” 34 (30), “A library that is visually appealing” 10 (9%) and “A library that is conveniently located” 12 (11%).

Given the above, it can be concluded that while respondents’ actual perceptions of the library services were still relatively high, they were, perhaps understandably, generally lower than expectations and, in some instances, the number of respondents disagreeing with some of the statements is of concern. This will become apparent when highlighting the main findings relating to the gaps between expectations and perceptions below. However, a further conclusion that can be made is that respondents were, in the main, (and despite the disagreements) positively predisposed towards the services provided by the NPL and this does bode well for the future.

#### **6.2.4 What are the gaps between users’ expectations and perceptions? (Key question 3)**

The findings relating to the third key question are crucial as they can point to the gaps (or differences) between expectations and perceptions and thus the potential weaknesses of the services provided. The results showed that there were gaps between users’ expectations and perceptions of the quality of services provided by the NPL indicating that expectations, in all instances but two (where expectations and perceptions were equal), exceeded perceptions. While for the most part, the gaps were sufficiently small and thus not considered significant (or of concern) there were instances where the gaps were sufficiently large to be of significance (and thus of concern to library management). This was most apparent in the categories of Access to information and Library facility and to a lesser extent in the category Staff services.

As noted above, it is the categories of Access to information and Library facility where weaknesses (or gaps over the threshold of 25%) were identified. With regard to the former, the following aspects or statements were of concern: “An adequate audio-visual collection”, “An efficient inter-library loan service, “An efficient reserve service” and “A comprehensive print collection”.

In terms of the category Access to information which can be considered a core function of the library, it can be concluded that the collection of the library does need to be improved, not only in terms of more books that are both relevant and new but also in terms of materials in digital format (such as CDs and DVDs).

With regard to the category of Library facility, the following were of concern in terms of the gap between expectations and perceptions: “Adequate number of computers”, “A library that is conveniently located” and “A library that is visually appealing”.

A second conclusion with regard to the gaps between expectations and perceptions is that while little, if anything could be done in terms of the location of the library, resolving the problems of insufficient computers in the library and the library’s lack of visual appeal are possible. The shortage of computers, given their crucial importance in accessing the Internet in particular, does need urgent attention.

While findings relating to the library staff (Staff services) could all be described as generally positive, two areas did emerge as potential areas of concern given that they were fairly close to the significant threshold and these were the statements “Staff who respond to users’ questions” and “Staff who are consistently courteous”. Responses to open questions also pointed to potential problems with regard to staff attitudes towards the users of the library.

The third conclusion is that given the crucial importance of positive relationships being maintained between staff and users, this is an aspect that needs to be flagged for attention by library management.

#### **6.2.5 Users’ satisfaction with library services and overall rating of quality of services**

Users were asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with three categories of the library, namely, Staff services, Access to information and Library facility. The percentages of those expressing satisfaction for each was 79%, 77% and 73% respectively. Those expressing

dissatisfaction were very few in number while those remaining neutral were as high as 20% in the case of Library facility.

The respondents' rating of the overall quality of services provided by the library was equally positive with an overall rating of 75%.

Given the above, it can be concluded that while users were largely satisfied with the services provided by the library as well as the overall quality of the services there were some who were not. The latter, together with the relatively high number of users not committing themselves (that is, remaining neutral) suggest that there is room for improvement and this is in line with the findings highlighted, and conclusions reached, above.

#### **6.2.6 What does the library need to do to meet the needs of its users? (Key question 4)**

It was earlier noted that the findings of the study would assist the library to identify weaknesses in the services delivered to users and by so doing provide an opportunity to address these weaknesses. While it is evident that the NPL is, in general, providing services which are meeting the needs of its users, it is equally evident that there are some areas in which improvements are required. The final key question concerns what the library needs to do in meeting the needs of its users and the response to this is described under the heading Recommendations below.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

Newane (2016) argued that it is vital for libraries to assess, track and understand users' needs and expectations and to react to the users' feedback on the quality of services provided and this reaction could include creating new policies which will benefit both the library and the user. In the light of the research findings (the feedback above) and conclusions arrived at, various recommendations are proposed for library management and the Nongoma Municipality to consider and implement. The categories of library service provide a structure for presenting the recommendations.

### **6.3.1 Staff services**

Bhim (2010) states that professional front-line customer care is a vital aspect of providing an acceptable level of service. Staff in the library are supposed to be helpful and knowledgeable but findings indicate that this was not always the case with some of the NPL staff.

- It is recommended library staff training must be provided on a regular basis. This training could take the form of workshops in, amongst other topics, communication skills, customer workshops and people skills.
- It is further recommended that in order to address staff knowledge of the theory and practice of library and information work, further study by staff be encouraged. This could take the form of formal study through correspondence and attendance, whenever possible, of short course and workshops covering aspects of library and information work.

### **6.3.2 Access to information**

The study revealed that the library plays a significant role in the community and it is often the only resource that users can turn to meet their information needs. Access to information is thus a fundamental function of the library. Bhim (2010) posits that access to various resources in the library can be considered a vital aspect of evaluating users' satisfaction with the library service. Library resources must always be easily available and accessible to users – they must also be relevant. Two recommendations emerge with regard to the library resources (the collection):

- In light of the complaints concerning outdated and thus irrelevant resources, it is recommended that attention be given to providing a more up-to-date collection through the acquisition of new books and, importantly, more audio-visual materials.
- It is further recommended that a new collection development policy which involves the library users in collection development must be introduced. A more inclusive approach in which users will be able to voice their needs will result in more relevant library resources being acquired and thus better access to information ensured.

Having the right book available to the right user at the right time can be considered a library maxim. In order to assist in giving effect to this

- It is recommended that library management investigate both the inter-library loan service and the reserve service provided by the library with the view to ensure better efficiency and thus the availability of library resources. In doing so access to information will be enhanced.

### **6.3.3 Library facility**

Bhim (2010) argued that a library that is not equipped with the necessary facilities will not be fulfilling its obligation to provide quality service and meet the information needs of the community it serves. What emerged as a significant concern was the shortage of computers in the library. The shortage of this “facility” is of concern given that this impacts on access to information, in particular, information accessed via the Internet.

- It is recommended that urgent attention be given to increasing the availability of computers. While financial constraints are acknowledged (and these constraints apply to other resources in the library) the availability of computers to facilitate access to the Internet is a necessity in an under-resourced community such as Nongoma.
- It is further recommended that in the interim a mechanism be put in place to ensure that all users have the opportunity to use a computer while in the library. This could take the form of limiting and strictly monitoring the amount of time a user has on a computer.

As indicated above the gap between users’ expectations and perceptions regarding the visual appeal of the library was a significant one. Meeting the need for a visually appealing library need not have huge financial implications.

- It is recommended that a meeting be convened between library staff and other stakeholders in the community with the aim of determining what could be done with regard to making the NPL a more visually appealing “place”. Possibilities could include plants, paint (both outside and inside) and making more use of displays.

There were some concerns with library not providing relevant resources to its users, others being old and outdated materials. Other respondents indicated that the library does not cater for their information needs



- It is recommended that Public librarians be included when books are selected at the DAC rather than going for an exchange where books have already been selected by depot librarians since public librarians work directly with the users and they know their community needs.
- It is further recommended the rotation of libraries in terms of books exchange, the first libraries to do the book exchanges stand a better chances of getting excellent books whereas the last libraries to do the book exchange do not have any choices but to take whatever materials they find at the depot even though such materials do not meet its users' need.

Finally, convenient hours of opening were an issue for some respondents and it can be seen as a valid one impacting on access to information.

- It is recommended that the opening hours of the library be reviewed. This is especially applicable to Saturdays where it is felt that the library opens too late and closes too early.

#### **6.4 Suggestions for further research**

- It has been noted that the vast majority of studies using the LibQUAL+™ survey have concerned the academic and research library. It would be useful for more studies such as this one to be done in the public library context and in so doing build a body of knowledge relating to public libraries which would, amongst other things, allow for more meaningful comparisons to be made and discussion to take place. It is evident that the provision of computers and access to the Internet can be considered as a “basic service” that public libraries need to provide. In the light of this, further studies are needed on how rural libraries and their municipalities are dealing with the provision of such a service given, amongst other constraints, finance, connectivity and increasing demand. Findings in this regard could be of immense value to the management of those libraries (such as Nongoma).
- In a similar vein, it is evident that the issues of inter-library loan and the reserve service are problematic and it would be useful to investigate if other rural public libraries are

providing such services and if they are, what are the problems and successes experienced. Both have implications for access to information

- Consideration be given to doing a similar follow-up study at the NPL after a period of one or two years to see to what extent the gaps between users' expectations and perceptions of the various library services have been addressed or not. A LibQUAL+™ survey is relatively inexpensive to conduct and conducting such a survey could indeed be done on a regular basis (as the literature recommends).

## **6.5 Summary**

This, the final chapter, provided a brief summary of the thesis. The summary was followed by the main findings and conclusions related to those findings. Recommendations based on the findings of the study were then presented to help the NPL to address the gaps between expectations and perceptions of library services deemed to be significant. By so doing they (the recommendations) would contribute to the NPL delivering a quality library service to its users. Lastly, some suggestions for further research were made.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 - CONSENT FORM FOR ADULT LIBRARY USER



Dear Adult Library User

My name is Nombuso Buthelezi. I am a Masters candidate studying at University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus. Currently, I am conducting an investigation adult user perception of services provided by Nongoma Public Library and I would appreciate your participation in the study. Should you be interested in participating, I ask that you complete a short questionnaire which should be approximately ten minutes of your time.

The findings of this study will be helpful in understanding the various user perceptions of adult library members using Nongoma Public Library. Your participation is therefore important.

Please note, however, that your participation is completely voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw from this study at any given time, you may do so without any consequences being imposed on you. Your responses will also be completely confidential. Your answers will also only be used for this specific study. After a period of five years, the questionnaires used for this study will be discarded, until such time they will be locked securely in a cabinet.

For further information you are welcome to contact myself or my supervisors on the following contact details:

Nombuso Buthelezi	or Mr Siyanda Kheswa	or Ms Mariette Snyman
School of Sociology	School of Sociology	HSSREC Administrator
Information Studies Program	Information Studies Program	Research Office
P.O. Box 1441	P.O. Box 01 Scottsville	P/Bag X54001
Nongoma	Pietermaritzburg	Durban
3950	3201	4000
Cell: 0725230265	Tel: (033) 2606987	Tel: (031) 260 8350
Tel: (035) 831 7528	<a href="mailto:kheswas1@ukzn.ac.za">kheswas1@ukzn.ac.za</a>	<a href="mailto:snymanm@ukzn.ac.za">snymanm@ukzn.ac.za</a>
<a href="mailto:Asehc11@gmail.com">Asehc11@gmail.com</a>		

Thank you kindly for your time and anticipated participation.

I..... (Full names of participant)

Hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participate in the abovementioned research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I desire to do so.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT.....

DATE.....

**Questionnaire**

**ADULT USER PERCEPTION OF LIBRARY SERVICES PROVIDED BY NONGOMA PUBLIC LIBRARY, KWAZULU-NATAL.**

**NOTE:** The aim of this study is to identify users’ expectations of service quality and their perceptions of service delivery with reference to Nongoma Public Library. “**Expectations**” will refer to what you personally want in terms of services provided by the library and “**Perceptions**” will refer to your actual experience of the services the library currently provides.

**1. Questions about yourself. Please put a cross [X] next to your choice.**

**1.1 Please indicate your gender.**

Male  Female

**1.2 Please indicate your age**

18 – 29  50 – 59   
 30 – 39  60 – 69   
 40 – 49  Over 69

**1.3 Please indicate your race**

African  White   
 Coloured  Other (please specify)  
 Indian  \_\_\_\_\_

**1.4 How often do you visit Nongoma Public Library?**

Everyday  Once a month   
 At least once a week  Once every six months   
 Once in every two weeks  This is my first time

**1.5 How often do you use library resources (e.g. books, encyclopaedias, newspapers, computers etc.)?**

Everyday  Once a month   
 At least once a week  Once every six months   
 Once every two weeks  This is my first time

**1.6 How often do you access electronic resources (e.g. internet) in the library?**

Everyday  Once a month   
 At least once a week  Once every six months   
 Once every two weeks  Never



**2 Please place a cross [X] in the table below the number best describes your “EXPECTATIONS”**

**(Expectations refers to what you personally want or expect of the services provided by the library)**

**1 = Strongly Agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Disagree; 5 = Strongly Disagree.**

### **2.1 Staff services**

	<b>I expect the library to provide</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1.1	Staff who instil confidence in users					
2.1.2	Staff who are consistently courteous					
2.1.3	Staff who respond to users ‘questions					
2.1.4	Staff who understand the needs of users					
2.1.5	Staff who are willing to assist users					
2.1.6	Staff who are knowledgeable to user-related queries					
2.1.7	Readers advisor to assist with reading request					

### **2.2 Access to information**

	<b>I expect the library to provide</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
2.2.1	A comprehensive print collection					
2.2.2	An adequate audio-visual collection					
2.2.3	Access to Online Public Access Catalogue					
2.2.4	An efficient inter-library loan services					
2.2.5	An efficient reserve service					
2.2.6	A comprehensive reference collection					
2.2.7	Well placed signage for easy access to reading material					
2.2.8	Efficient internet access					

### **2.3 Library facility**

	<b>I expect</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
2.3.1	A library that is conveniently located					
2.3.2	A library that is visually appealing					

- 2.3.3 A library that has adequate light
- 2.3.4 Convenient hours of service
- 2.3.5 Prompt re-shelving
- 2.3.6 Adequate photocopying facility
- 2.3.7 Adequate number of computers
- 2.3.8 Quiet and comfortable reading areas

**2.4 General**

	<b>The library</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
2.4.1	Provide me with all reading requirements					
2.4.2	Satisfies my information needs					
2.4.3	I am satisfied with the way I am treated in the library					

**3 If you would like to add any further comments about the services you expect from Nongoma Public Library, please do so in the space provided.**

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**4 Please place a cross [X] in the table below the number that best describes your “PERCEPTIONS”**

**(Perceptions refer to your actual experiences of services the library currently provides)**

**1 = Strongly Agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Disagree; 5 = Strongly Disagree.**

**4.1 Staff services**

	<b>The library currently provides</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
4.1.1	Staff who instil confidence in users					
4.1.2	Staff who are consistently courteous					
4.1.3	Staff who respond to users ‘questions					
4.1.4	Staff who understand the needs of users					
4.1.5	Staff who are willing to assist users					

- 4.1.6 Staff who are knowledgeable to user-related queries
- 4.1.7 Readers advisor to assist with reading request

**4.2 If you would like to add any further comments on the staff services mentioned above, please do so in the space provided.**

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**4.3 Access to information**

	<b>A library that currently provides</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
4.3.1	A comprehensive print collection					
4.3.2	An adequate audio-visual collection					
4.3.3	Access to Online Public Access Catalogue					
4.3.4	An efficient inter-library loan services					
4.3.5	An efficient reserve service					
4.3.6	A comprehensive reference collection					
4.3.7	Well placed signage for easy access to reading material					
4.3.8	Efficient internet access					

**4.4 If you would like to add any further comments on access to information, please do so in the space provided.**

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**4.5 Library facility**

	<b>The library currently provides</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
4.5.1	A library that is visually appealing					
4.5.2	A library that has adequate light					
4.5.3	Convenient hours of service					

- 4.5.4 Prompt re-shelving
- 4.5.5 Adequate photocopying facility
- 4.5.6 Adequate number of computers
- 4.5.7 Quiet and comfortable reading areas

**4.6 If you would like to add any further comments regarding library facilities, please do so in the space provided.**

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**4.7 General**

<b>The library</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
4.7.1 Provide me with all reading requirements					
4.7.2 Satisfies my information needs					
4.7.3 I am satisfied with the way I am treated in the library					

**4.8 If you would like to add any further comments regarding library facilities, please do so in the space provided.**

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**5 User satisfaction**

**Please mark with a cross [X] in one box only**

**5.1 In general, how satisfied are you with the level of service provided by the staff?**

Very satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>
Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>		

**5.2 If dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, please elaborate in the space provided.**

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**5.2 In general, how satisfied are you with access to information provided by the library?**

Very satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>
Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>		

**5.3 If dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, please elaborate in the space provided.**

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**5.4 In general, how satisfied are you with the library facilities that were mentioned earlier?**

Very satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>
Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>		

**5.5 If dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, please elaborate in the space provided.**

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**6 How would you rate the overall quality of services provided by the library?**

Very good	<input type="checkbox"/>	Poor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very poor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>		

**7 If you have any further comments and/or suggestions regarding any aspect of Nongoma Public Library, please do so in the space provided**

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**Thank you for your participation. Please return the completed questionnaire to me.**

## Appendix 3 - Gatekeeper's letter



Umkhandlu wakwa-NONGOMA -Local Municipality  
Tel:(035) 831 7500 | Fax: (035) 831 3152 | P.O. Box 84 | Nongoma 3950

<b>Ref:</b> Requesting to do Research <b>Enq:</b> Mrs VT Sokhela	<b>Tel.</b> 035 8317500 Ext.7543 <b>Date:</b> 29/03/2018
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NONGOMA MUNICIPALITY  
LOT 103, MASON STREET  
NONGOMA, 3950



University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Pietermaritzburg  
Pte Bag X01,  
Scottsville, 3209

Dear Miss Nombuso Portia Buthelezi (student no.: 203505746)

**RE-REQUEST TO CONDUCT A STUDY IN NONGOMA MUNICIPALITY  
(NONGOMA PUBLIC LIBRARY)**

I hereby confirming that the request to conduct a study titled "Adult users perceptions of services provided by Nongoma Public Library" has been successful and also confirm that you will be given all the necessary support.

Yours Faithfully

MRS VT SOKHELA  
MUNICIPAL MANAGER (NONGOMA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY)

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE** : (Cllr M.A Mnewango, Hon Mayor, Cllr A.N. Xulu – Hon. Deputy Mayor; Cllr B.W. Zulu- Hon. Speaker (Ex –Officio); Mr s V.T Sokhela –Municipal Manager (Ex-Officio); Cllr B.J. Ntshangase; Cllr N.G. Xaba; Cllr N.M. Mthembu; Cllr R.Z. Buthelezi; Cllr A.N. Ndabandaba; Cllr S.A. Hlongwane).

## Appendix 4 - Ethical clearance



18 June 2018

**Ms Nombuso Portia Buthelezi (203505746)**  
School of Social Sciences  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Ms Buthelezi,

**Protocol reference number: HSS/0387/018M**

**Project Title: Adult user's perceptions of library services provided by Nongoma Public Library, KwaZulu-Natal**

**Approval Notification – Expedited Application**

In response to your application received 07 May 2018, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

**Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.**

**PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.**

**The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.**

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....  
**Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)**

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Mr Siyanda Kheswa  
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor Maheshvarl Naidu  
Cc School Administrator: Ms Nancy Mudau

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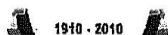
**Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee**  
**Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)**

**Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building**

**Postal Address: Private Bag X64001, Durban 4000**

**Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za / snymanm@ukzn.ac.za / mohunp@ukzn.ac.za**

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