CHAPTER FOUR

4 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This penultimate chapter deals with the research findings and discusses their implications. In chapter three the research methodology was explained and why questionnaires were used as the research tool. This chapter provides an analysis of the responses to the questionnaires administered to the students, and the staff of the DEU and the library. The results are presented in sequence, one that follows the items in the questionnaire, and they are discussed accordingly.

It needs to be reiterated here that with 275 completed and usable questionnaires received from the distance learners, a response rate of only 68.75 percent was recorded. The results of the students' responses are presented first, followed by those of the DEU and lastly those of the University Library staff.

4.2 STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRES

4.2.1 PERSONAL INFORMATION

In this section, the questions asked were related to information about the students and the courses being pursued.

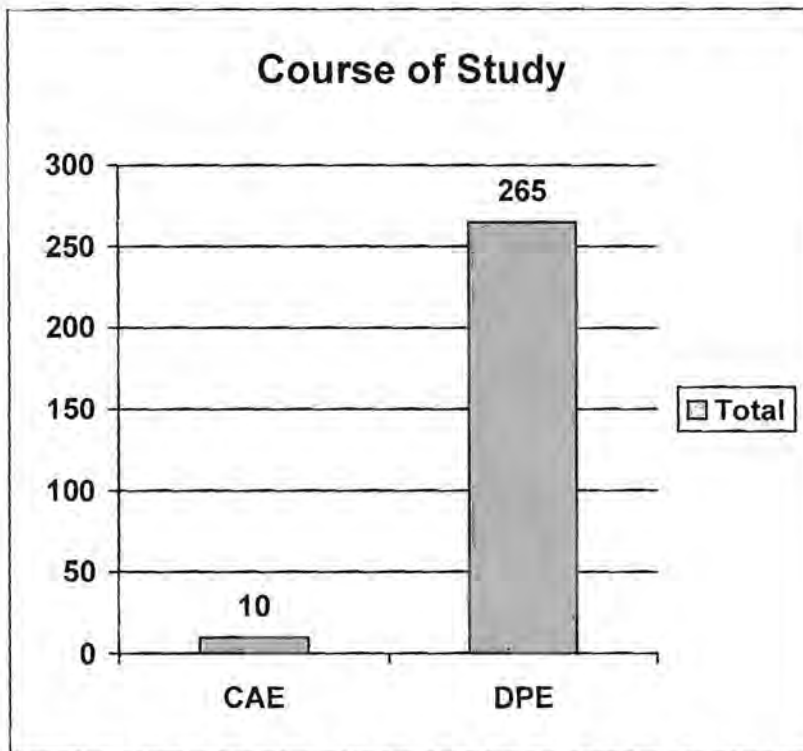**4.2.1.1 Course of study**
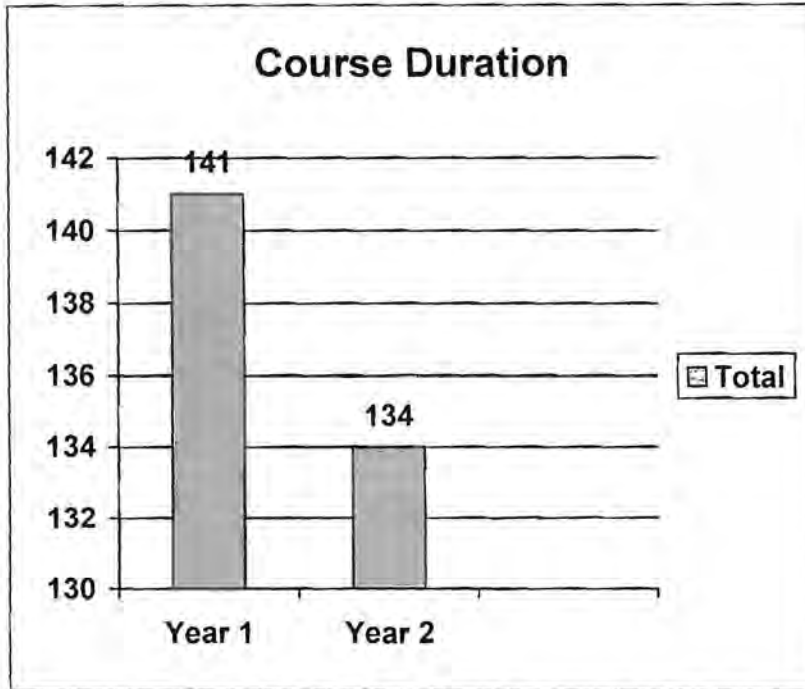
FIGURE 1

Course of Study

Figure 1 indicates that there are two categories of students studying on distance education programme provided by the UB. They are the CAE and the DPE students. Only 10 of the 18 students on the CAE course responded to the questionnaire. This was 55.6 percent of the total number of CAE students. The 10 CAE respondents formed only 3.6 percent of the total respondents. The total number of questionnaires administered to the DPE students was 382. Of this number, 265 students responded to the questionnaire. This was 69.4 percent of the total number of students who received the questionnaire in this group, and was 96.4 percent of all the respondents.

4.2.1.2   Course duration

FIGURE 2

In order to ascertain in which year of the programme the respondents were enrolled, they were asked to complete a portion in the questionnaire that requested this information. What is seen in Figure 2 is the distribution of the students. From the figure, there were 141 respondents in their first year, which apparently meant that they were in their eighth month in the programme. They were 51.3 percent of all respondents. In the second year there were 134 (48.7 percent). It was noted earlier that the number of CAE students that responded at the time of compiling the results of the questionnaires was 10 out of 18. All the CAE students were in their second and final year. In other words, of the 134 respondents in year two, 10 were CAE students. This means that 7.5 percent of the respondents in the Year 2 group were CAE students. The remaining 124 respondents (92.5 percent) in year two were DPE students.

4.2.1.3   Employment status

FIGURE 3
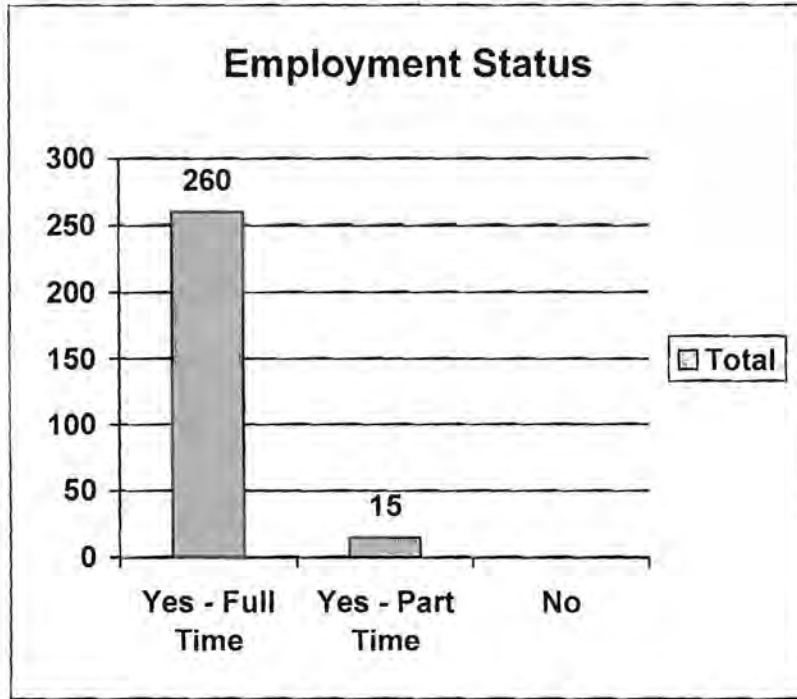
Employment Status

The above figure shows the employment status of the respondents. Three options were provided. These included whether they were working full time, part-time or not at all. Figure 3 indicates that not one of the respondents is without a job. However, 15 of the respondents (5.5 percent) are working part time, while 260 of them (94.5 percent) are engaged in full-time employment. Thus all the students who responded have to cope with a job and studying. It is also important to note that 11 (73.3 percent) of those who were engaged in part-time work were based in town or close to where UBL has a presence.

4.2.1.4   Place and location of work

FIGURE 4

Place of Work
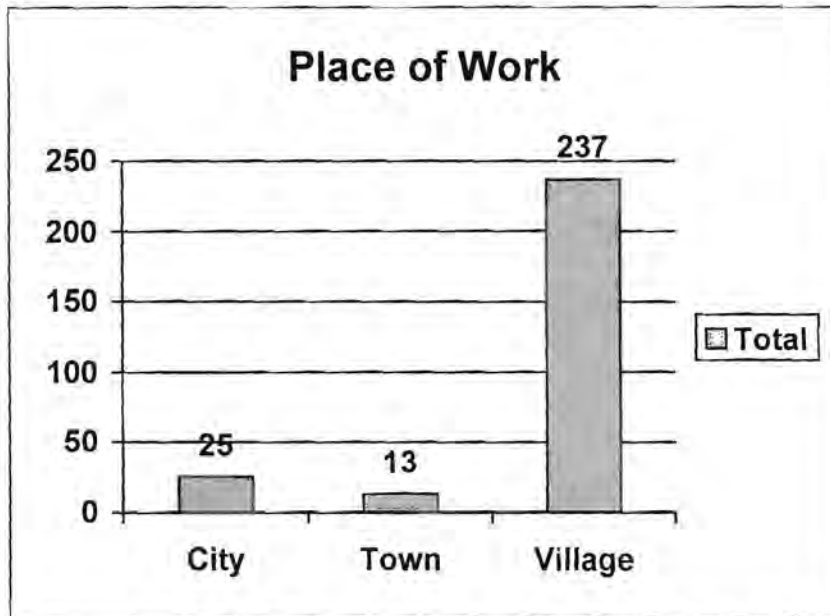
The questionnaire asked the students to state where they live and work. It is clear that the University of Botswana, in terms of physical structures, like the Library, makes its presence felt mostly in two cities in the country. Figure 4 above shows that most of the respondents live in remote areas, rather than in metropolitan or urban areas. Out of the 275 respondents, 237 respondents (86.2 percent) live or work in villages, 26 respondents (9.5 percent) are city dwellers and 13 (4.7 percent) live or work in towns.

4.2.1.5 Physical disability

FIGURE 5

Physical Disability

A bar chart titled "Physical Disability" showing two bars. The y-axis ranges from 0 to 300 in increments of 50. The "No" bar reaches 243 and the "Yes" bar reaches 32. A legend indicates "Total".

The respondents were asked to state whether they have any physical disability, which is severe enough to make it difficult for them to get to a library. Figure 5 above shows the distribution of those who responded 'yes' and 'no'. The response of 243 respondents (88.4 percent) was that they did not have any disability that made it difficult for them to get to a library. On the other hand, 32 of them (11.6 percent) responded that they had a disability. Although most of the respondents did not have a disability, it is important that the small minority with a physical disability should be given due consideration by the library.

4.2.2 LIBRARY UTILISATION

The intention of this section was to determine the extent of the current utilisation of library facilities by the students for their course of study. We wanted to know if they were specifically told that it was a requirement for them to use the library for their

course. Questions raised included a number trying to establish how they had been equipped to use the library and how often they use library facilities.

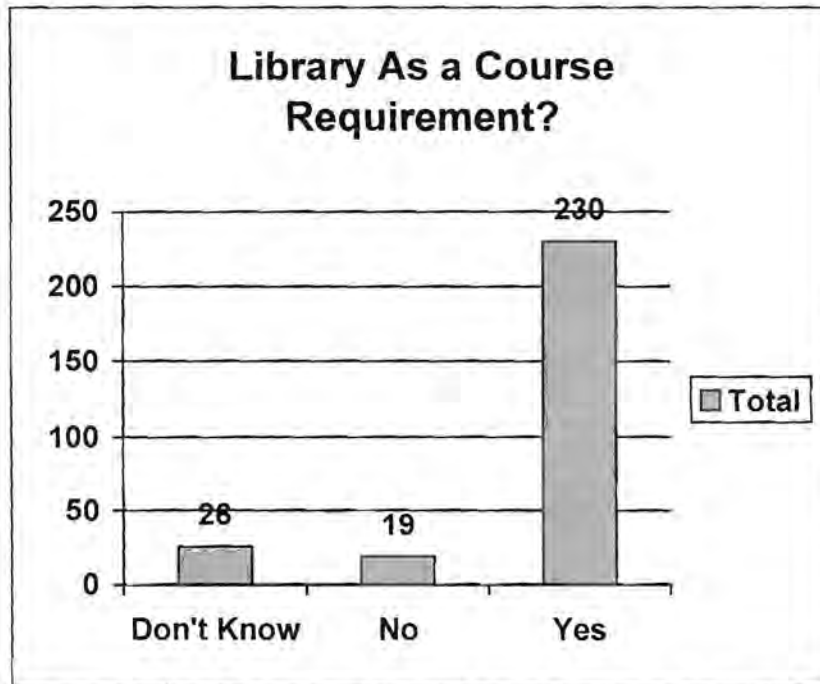### 4.2.2.1 Library as a requirement

FIGURE 6

Figure 6 shows the degree of awareness of the students concerning the use of library facilities for their course of study. A question was asked to find out from the students whether it was a clearly stated requirement of their course for them to make use of libraries or not. Some 230 students (83.6 percent) responded that it was a clearly stated requirement for them to make use of libraries. Only 19 of them (6.9 percent) offered 'No' while 26 students (9.5 percent) claimed they did not know.

4.2.2.2 Need to supplement course material

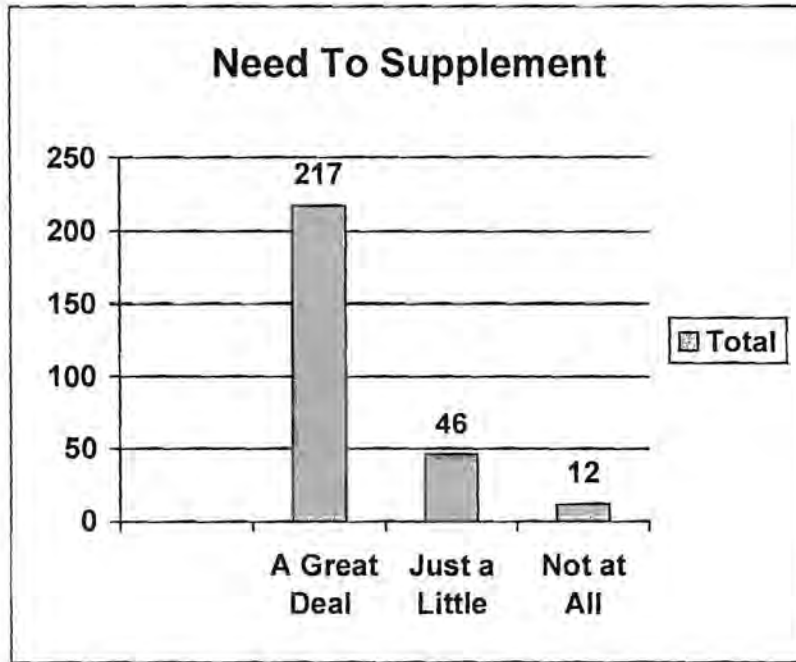FIGURE 7

Need To Supplement

Figure 7 above shows whether students felt there was a need to supplement course materials given to them with additional reading or not. A good majority of them responded in the affirmative and only a small number did not see the need to supplement the course materials given to them. 12 respondents (4.4 percent) answered 'Not at all', 46 students (16.7 percent) 'yes' but 'just a little', while 217 of them (78.9 percent) responded 'yes' with 'a great deal'.

4.2.2.3 Use of library for courses

FIGURE 8

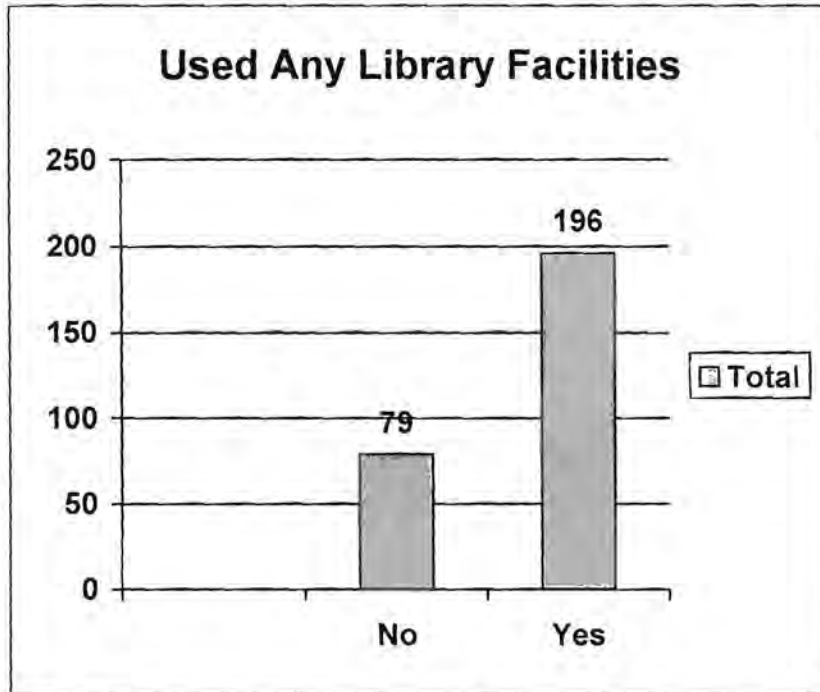
Used Any Library Facilities

Figure 8 above shows students' responses to the question 'Have you used any library facilities for your course?' 196 of the respondents (71.3 percent) claimed they had, while 79 students (28.7 percent) offered no, they had not been using any library facilities for their course. In other words, this last category of students have been depending entirely on the course materials given to them for preparing for their examinations and for writing their assignments.

4.2.2.4 Time span of using library facilities

With regard to those who said they had been using the library, they were asked for how long they had been using the library facilities. The responses received from this question were so diverse as to render it difficult to represent them in a table. It ranged from two years, that is, from the time they started their programme, to as short as a few days before the DPE students came for the residential session where this questionnaire was

administered. Of course, a number of them responded that they had not used a library since they had started their programme. It was noted, however, that some of them indicated that they wanted to use a library but that they did not live or work in an area where there was a library.

4.2.2.5 Library use rate

FIGURE 9
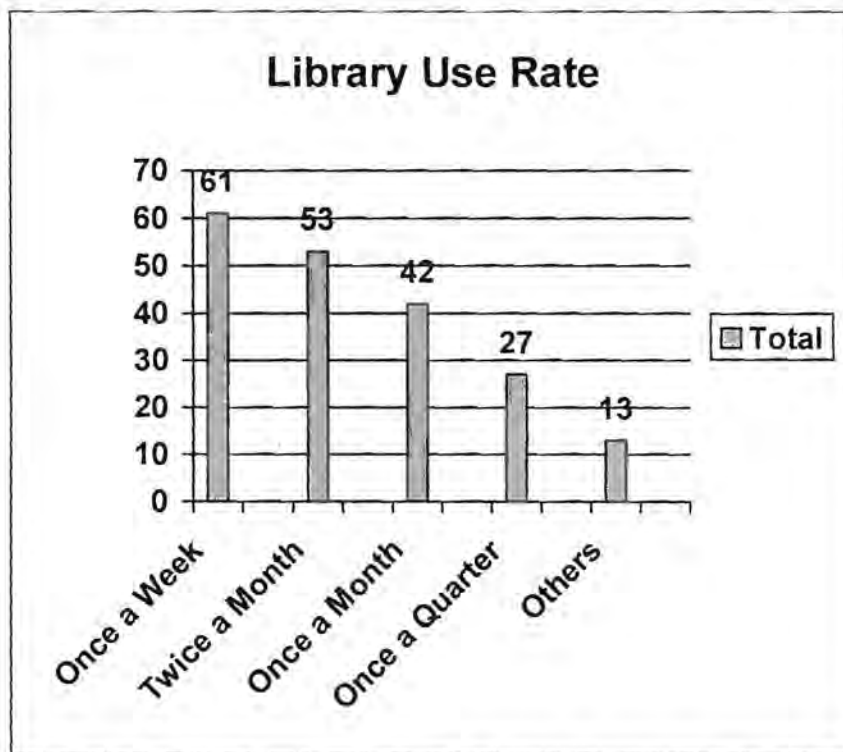
In Figure 9 the responses of the respondents to the question "How often they used the library" are shown. 61 of the respondents (22.2 percent) claimed they used the library once a week. It has been noted above that 11 of those engaged in a part-time job live in a town or close to where the UB Libraries are situated. It is remarkable that only 2 of them (18.2 percent) belonged to the group that claimed they used the library once a week. These two part-time workers represent 3.3 percent of those who patronise the library once a week.

53 respondents (19.3 percent) maintained they visit the library twice a month, 42 respondents (15.3 percent) once a month and 27 of them (9.8 percent) went to the library only once in three months. In the event that none of the above options were applicable for some respondents, an 'Others' option was included asking them for a specific response. Only 13 respondents ticked this option: some of them indicated that they visited the library two to four times a week, some three to six times a month and others stated whenever they wanted. This group represents 4.7 percent of respondents. The total number of respondents to the question shown in Figure 9 was 196. This figure corresponds with the number of those who claimed that they were already using library facilities, as given in figure 8.

4.2.2.6 Purpose of library use
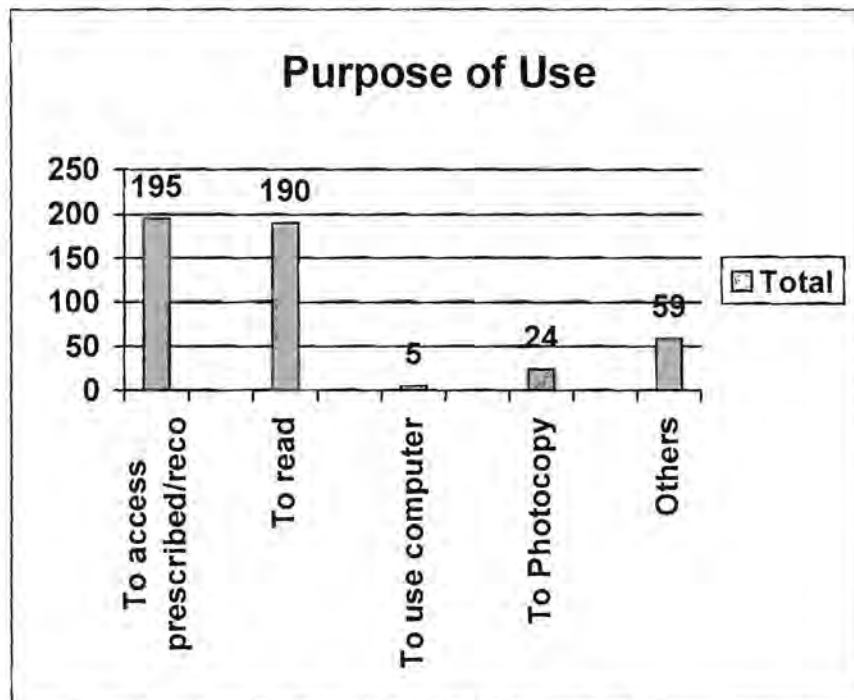
FIGURE 10

Purpose of Use

Figure 10 above shows the purpose for which students use the library. In asking this question a list of options was provided out of which the students were asked to choose the

ones that might be pertinent or relevant to them. If their options were not included in the list provided, they also had the option of adding any other purposes for which they used the library. It should also be noted that the respondents were not limited to the number of options that they could choose. They were free to select as many options as were relevant or appropriate to them. It is, therefore, not surprising that some respondents selected all the options available. A total of 195 respondents claimed that they used the library facilities to access prescribed and recommended materials. This figure represents 70.9 percent of the total number of respondents; and 99.5 percent of those who maintained that they were using the library facilities. 190 respondents stated that they used the library facilities to read. This is 69.1 percent of the total number of the respondents and 96.9 percent of those who had been using the library facilities. To use a computer was another option provided as a purpose for using the library. This option recorded a very low score as only 5 respondents stated that they used the library for that purpose. These were 1.8 percent of all the respondents and 2.6 percent of those who maintained they were using the library.

24 of the respondents claimed they went to the library for the purpose of photocopying, 8.7 percent of the entire respondents and 12.2 percent of those that were using the library. There were 59 other respondents who claimed that they used the library for purposes other than those itemised. These other purposes for which they stated that they used the library included research, borrowing and recreation.

4.2.2.7   Future library use

FIGURE 11

Future Library Usage
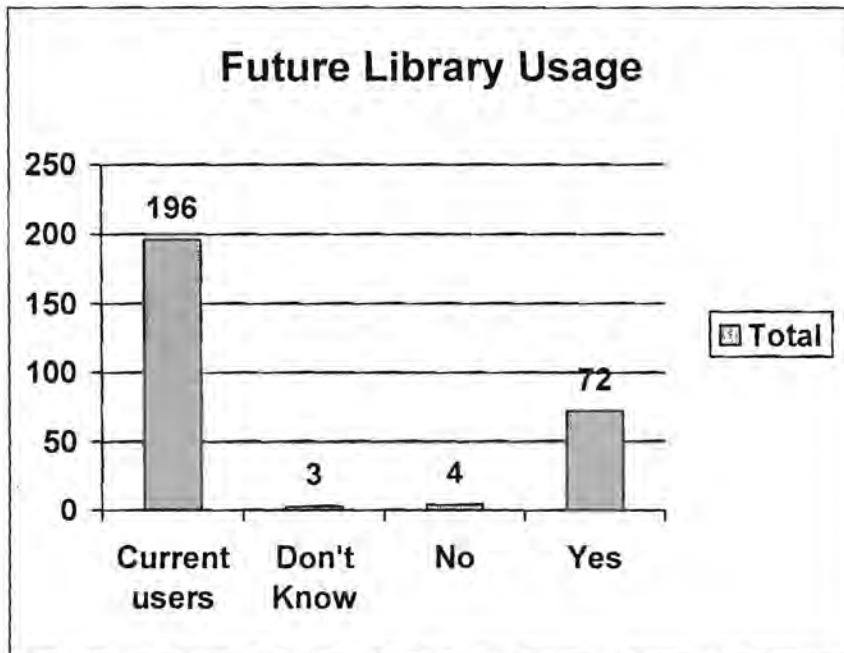
The respondents who claimed they had not been using library facilities for their course at the time of this research were asked if they expected to use the library in future. Three options were provided for them. The options included: don't know, no and yes. Altogether, 79 respondents answered this question. As seen in the above figure, 196 respondents were currently using a library. Out of the 79 students who were yet to start using any library, 72 of them (91.1 percent) responded that they expected to use a library in the future for their course, 4 students (5 percent) answered no, and 3 students or 3.8 percent thought they did not know if they would use the library in future.

4.2.2.8   Library use training

FIGURE 12

Library Use Training
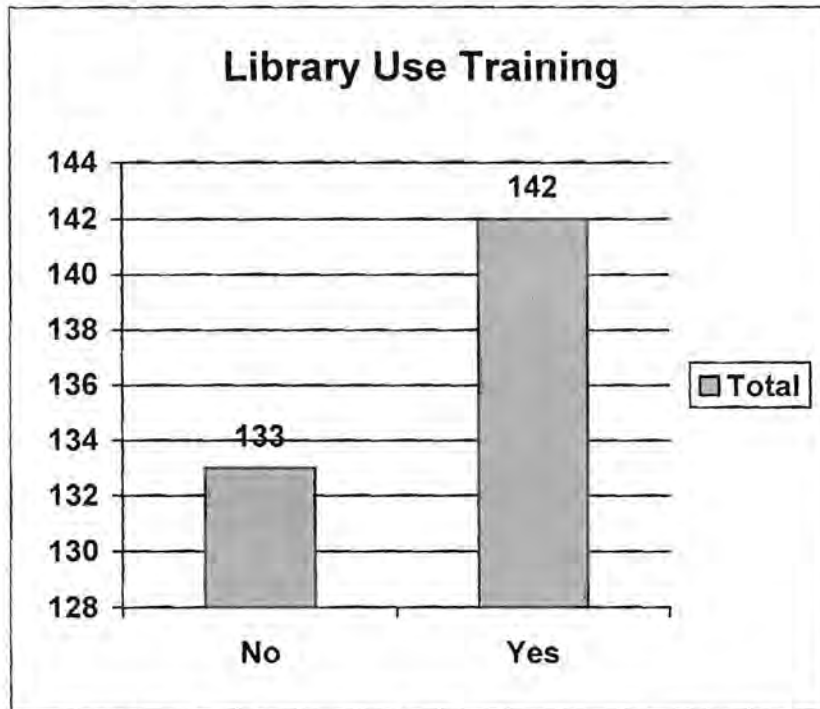
Figure 12 above represents the response of the students to the question asking whether they had received any training in the use of libraries as part of their course. 133 (48.4 percent) answered no, and 142 (51.6 percent) responded yes. The explanation given by those who responded in the affirmative was that they obtained training on library use during the orientation given to them when they went for registration after getting admission to the University. Others said they received brief training from librarians at the public library. Some of them added that they would not regard the orientation briefing as training.

4.2.3 STUDENTS AND UBL

4.2.3.1 Nearest university library

FIGURE 13
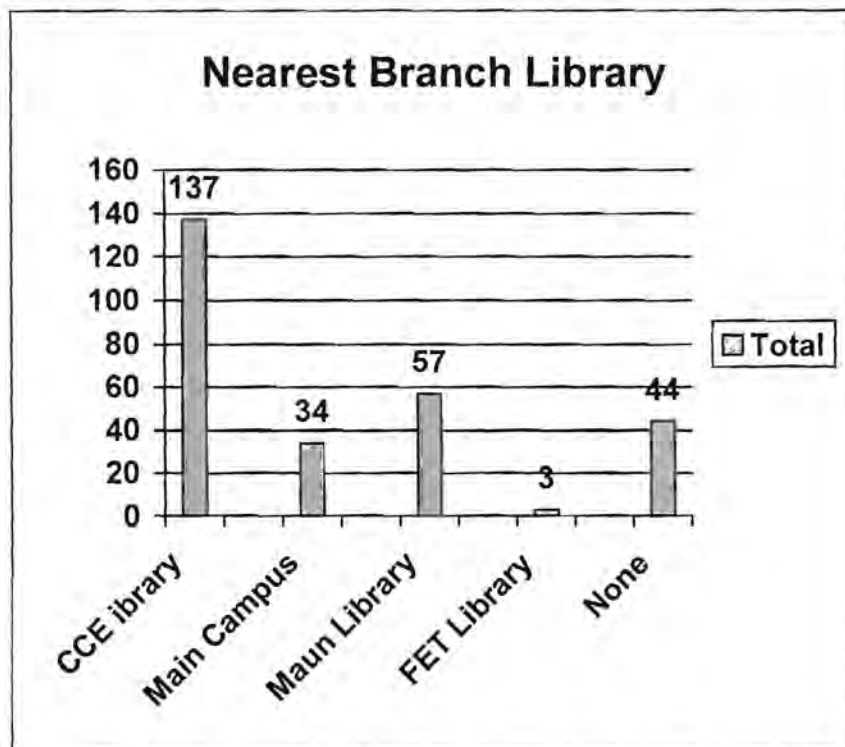
Figure 14 indicates that the majority of the respondents (137 of them or 49.8 percent) stated that the CCE (North) library was the closest to where they lived or worked. 57 respondents (20.7 percent) were living or working very close to the newly established branch library in Maun, for 34 of them (12.4 percent) the main library was the nearest, and 3 students (1.1 percent) indicated that the FET branch library was the closest. Even though an option for 'none' was not provided, 44 (16 percent) of the respondents declared that none of the branch libraries was close to their home or workplace.

4.2.3.2 Distance from the libraries

Even though we wanted to ascertain the distance the students need to travel to get to any of the university branch libraries, as well as the time it takes to get there from their places of work, this proved somewhat difficult to establish. The reason for this was that the majority of the students could not give an estimate. They therefore left the question unanswered. It is, however, worth noting that some of them that completed this question claimed they needed to travel 500 to 1300 kilometres, for up to two days in some cases because of inadequate transport facilities, to get to one of the branch libraries of the UB.

4.2.3.3 Arrangement to use nearest library

FIGURE 14
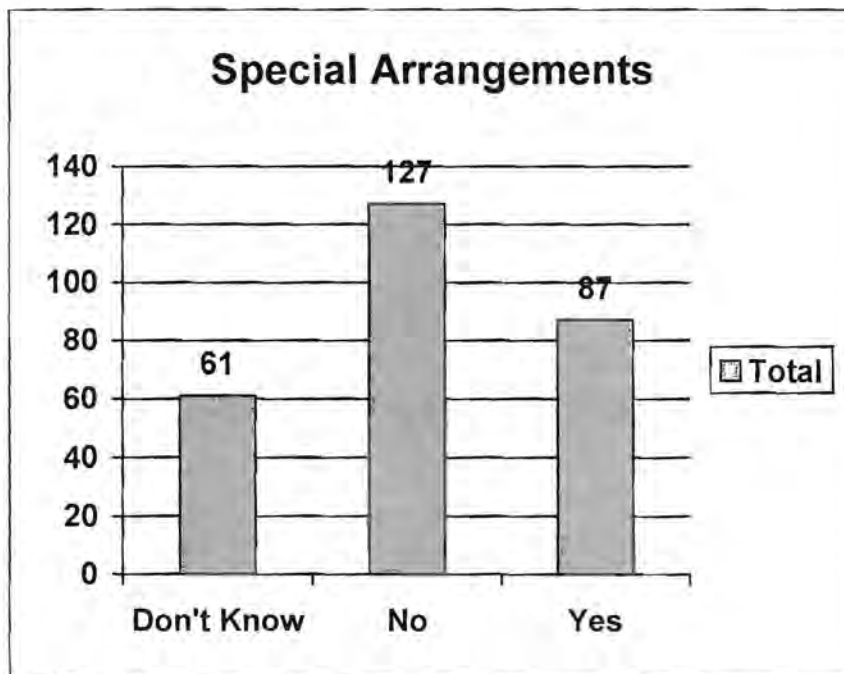
The respondents were required to indicate whether or not, to the best of their understanding, there were any special arrangements put in place for them to use a library near where they lived or worked. The response could either be 'yes', 'no' or 'don't k

know'. 87 of them (31.6 percent) ticked 'yes', 61 (22.2 percent) answered 'don't know', while the largest number, 127 (46.2 percent) gave 'no' as a response.

4.2.3.4 Knowledge of accessibility to subject librarian

FIGURE 15
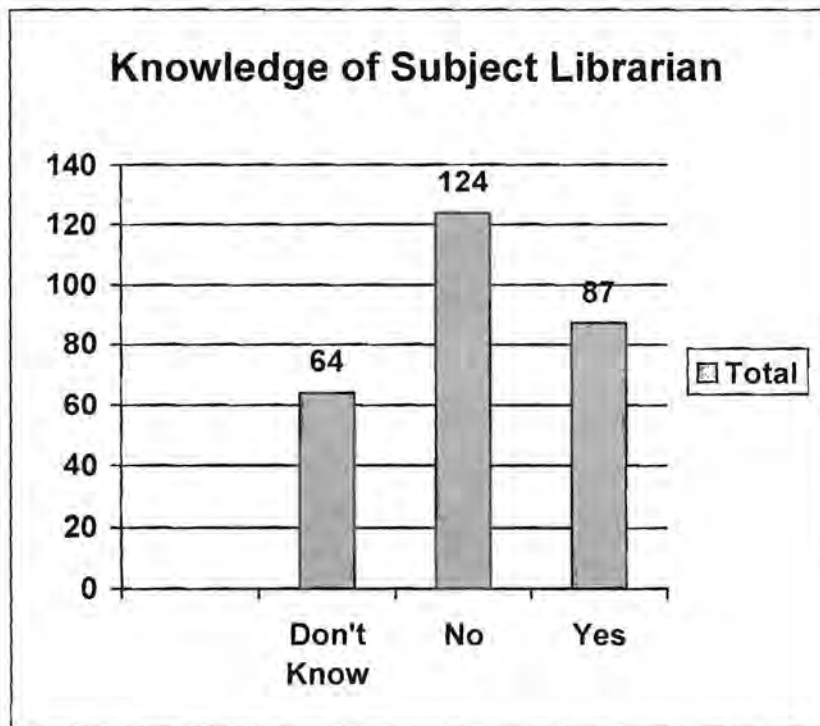
The findings in Figure 15 show that 64 respondents (23.3 percent) did not know how to get access to the subject librarian for their course of study. 87 of them (31.6 percent) did know, while the largest group of 124 students (45.1 percent) responded 'no' to the question.

4.2.4   KNOWLEDGE AND APPLICATION OF THE INTERNET

4.2.4.1   Internet knowledge

FIGURE 16
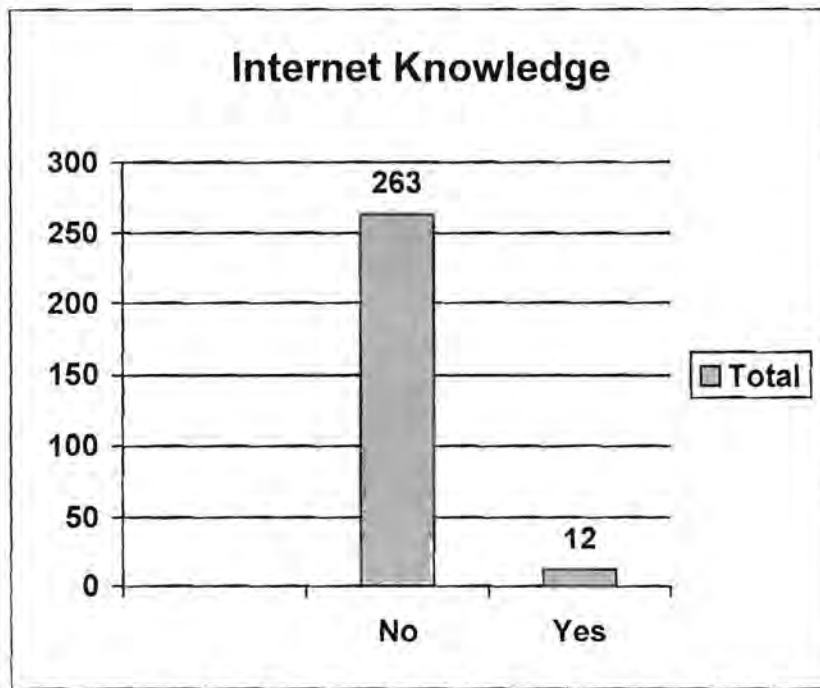
Figure 16 represents the respondents' knowledge of the Internet. Of the 275 respondents only 12 (4.4 percent) of them claimed to have knowledge of the Internet. The majority of them - 263 (95.6 percent) - disclosed that they did not have any knowledge of the Internet. Regarding their responses to whether they could search the UB Library website for information, surprisingly only 34 of them (12.4 percent) stated that they could (See Figure 18 below). It is hard to believe that the respondents could not identify the link between the UBL website and the Internet. Obviously, adequate training and enlightenment is required on library skills and computer and Internet skills for these students.

4.2.4.2 Access to computer with Internet

FIGURE 17
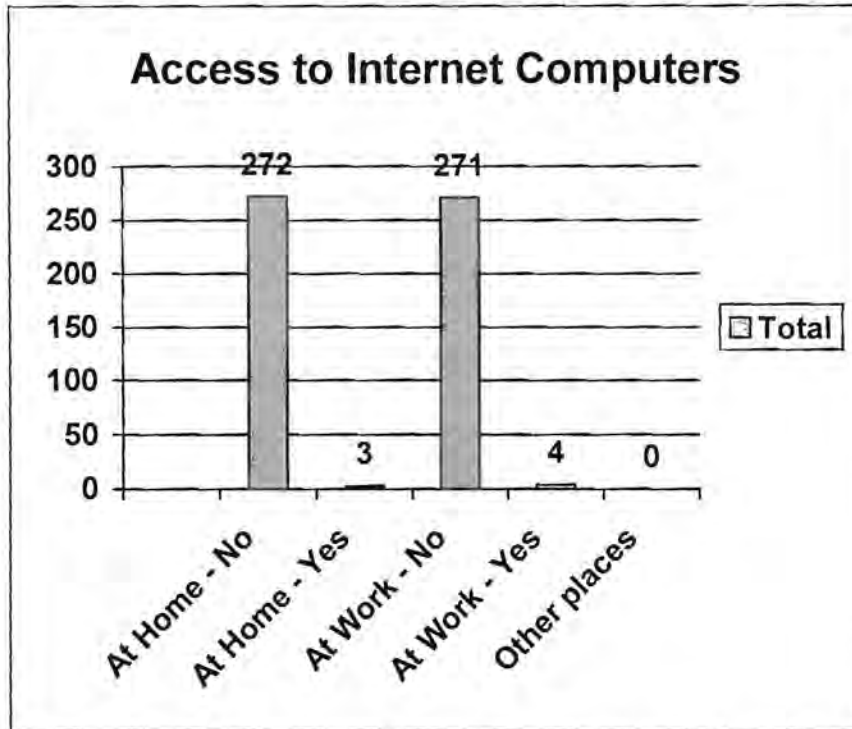
Figure 17 reveals the responses to the question about whether or not students had access to a computer linked to the Internet. An attempt was made to find out where they could obtain access, whether 'at home', 'at work', or 'other places'. The responses were not encouraging as only 3 respondents (1.1 percent) stated they had access to a computer with Internet facilities at home, while 272 (98.9 percent) do not have such facilities at home. At work there is little difference. Only 4 (1.5 percent) had access to the facilities, whilst a large majority (271 representing 98.5 percent) disclosed that they did not. There were no responses to 'other places'. Previously only 12 respondents (4.4 percent) stated that they had Internet knowledge (See Fig.16 above).

4.2.4.3 Knowledge of searching for information at UBL website

FIGURE 18
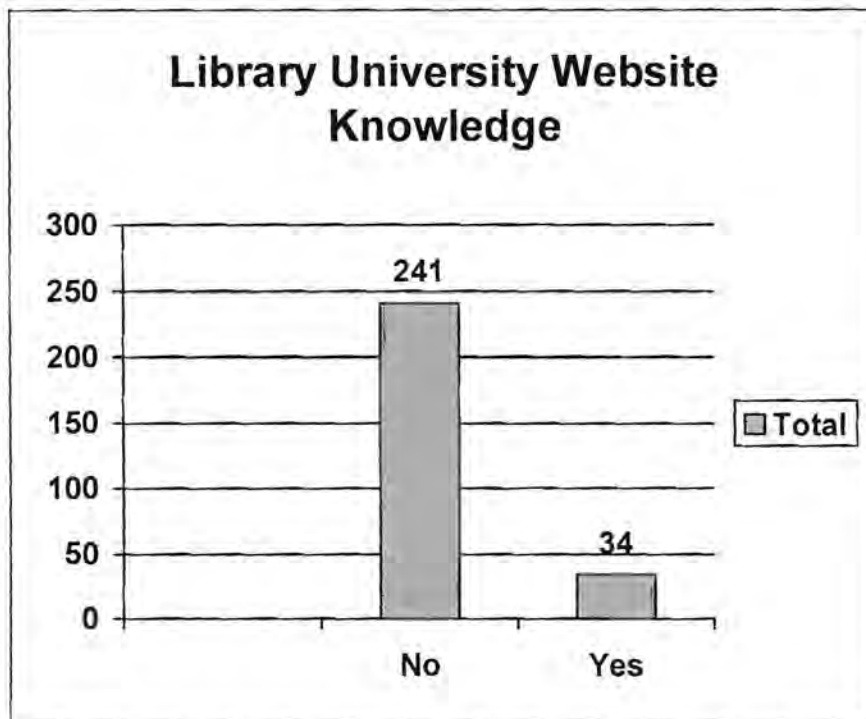
Figure 18 above indicates whether or not the respondents know how to search for information at the University Library website. Even though more than half of the respondents claimed they had training in use of the library, and that they received their training during their orientation programme in UB (see Figure12 above), only 34 of the respondents (12.4 percent) knew how to search for information at the UBL website. This is despite the fact that most of them claimed that they were taken through the website when receiving library training during orientation. A large majority of them - 87.6 percent (241 respondents) - claimed they did not have any knowledge about how to search for information at the UBL website.

4.2.4.4   Searching the UBL database

FIGURE 19
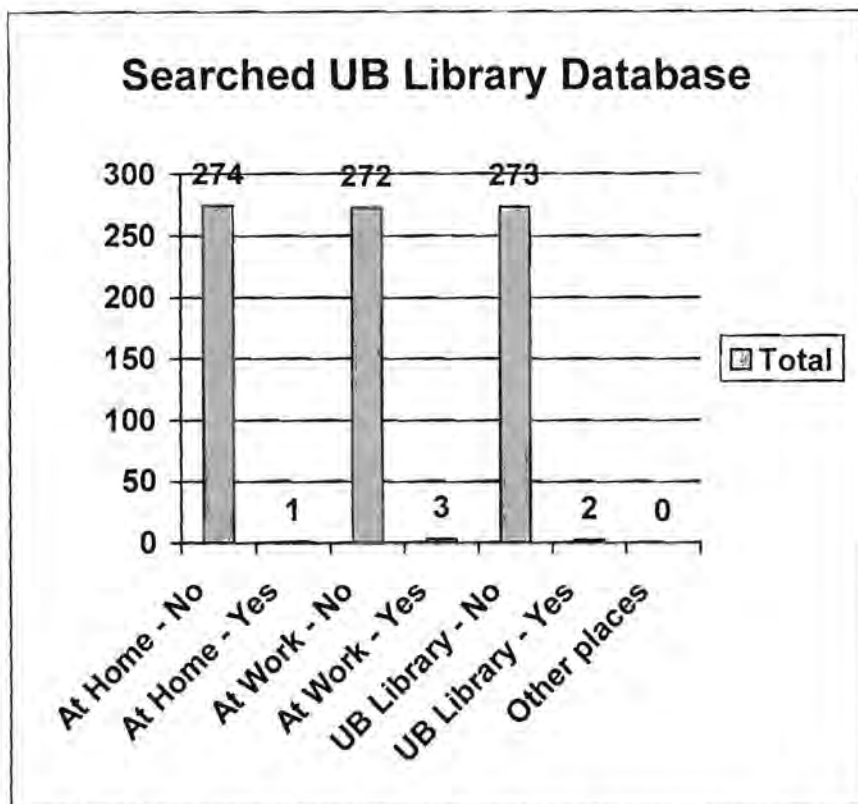
Figure 19 shows the responses of the students to the question on whether or not they had searched the University Library database. In asking this question, various options were provided. Such options included: 'at home', 'at work', 'UB Library' and 'other places'. The respondents' answers were quite revealing as well as disturbing. Out of the 275 responses for the 'At Home' option, only one respondent meaning (just 0.4 percent) gave yes, while 274 respondents (99.6 percent) had never searched the UB Library database at home. There was no significant difference in the responses to the 'At work' option. Only 3 respondents (1.1 percent) claimed they had searched the UB Library database at work. It will be recalled that more than half of the total respondents - 142 (51.6 percent) - stated they had some training in the use of libraries (See Fig. 12 above) yet only 2 respondents (0.7 percent) had searched the UB Library database even in the UB Library. These responses correlate with the responses to the question on whether they had access to the

Internet. It will be recalled that in Figure 17 only 4 respondents said they had access to a computer with Internet facilities at work and 3 respondents had such a facility at home.

4.2.4.5 Internet café in locality

FIGURE 20

Internet Cafe In Town/Village
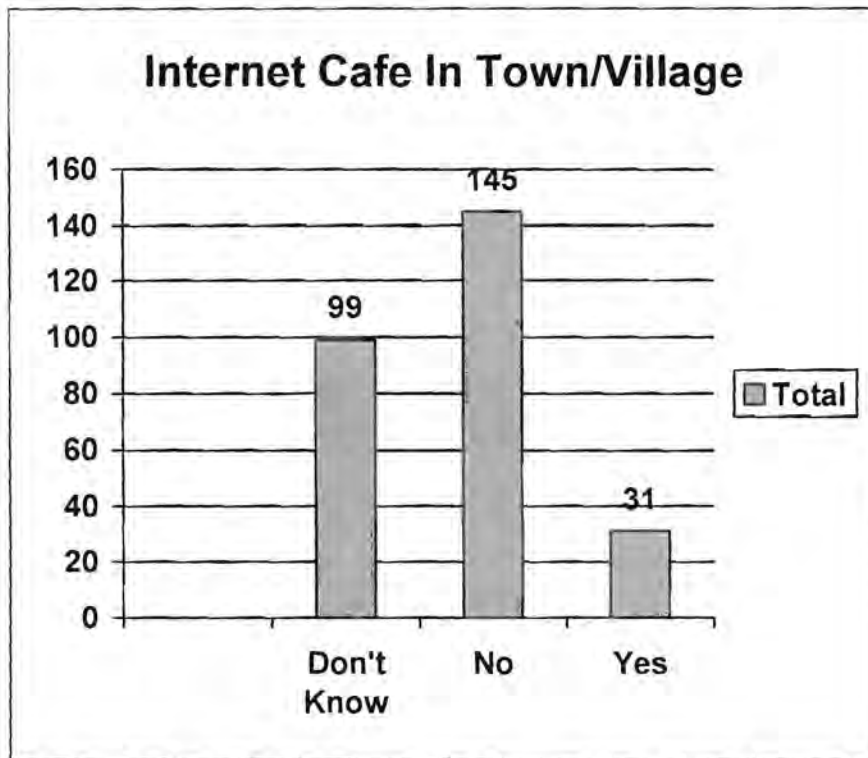
Figure 20 above depicts the responses to the question posed on the availability of the Internet in their locality. Specifically, the question asked was 'Is there an Internet Café in your town or near where you live?' A high proportion of the respondents answered 'don't know'. This group numbered 99 (36 percent). The highest response to this question came from those who stated 'no'. More than half of the respondents - 145 (52.7 percent) - made up this group, while 31 (11.3 percent) responded 'yes' to the question. Looking at Figure 17, which shows the responses to whether or not they had access to a computer with Internet facilities, however, a total of only 7 respondents stated that they had these facilities either at home or at work and in 'other places' there were no responses. One

could only assume that the reason for this discrepancy was in the interpretation given to the word 'access' by the students. They probably thought it meant easiness and freedom to use the Internet facilities, without having to take much trouble to do so or be asked to pay for the service immediately.

4.2.5 OTHER LIBRARY RESOURCES

4.2.5.1 Availability of BNLS branch library in locality

FIGURE 21
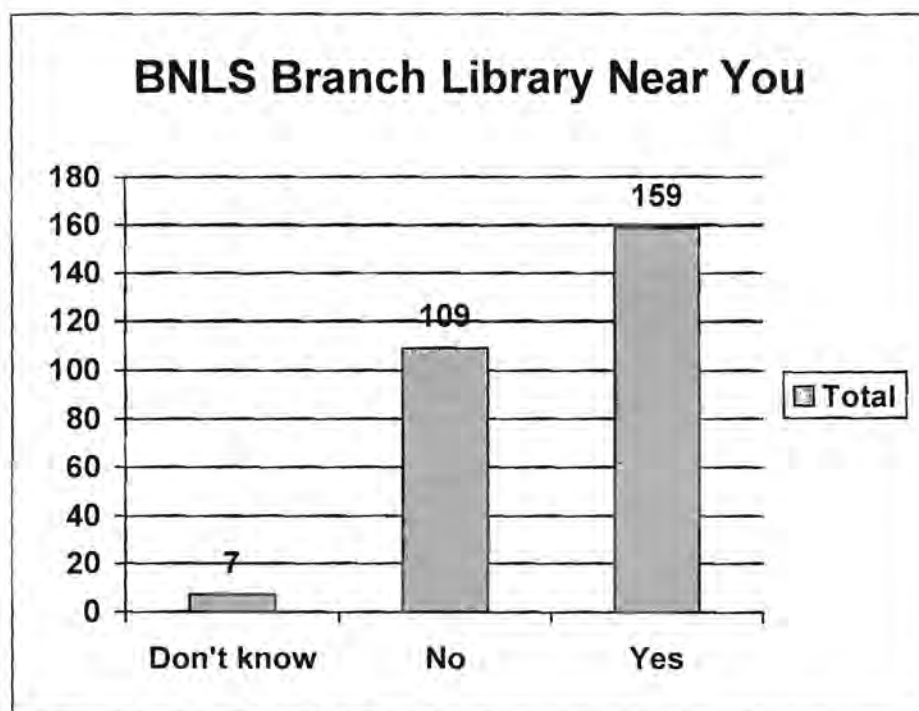
The Botswana National Library Service (BNLS) has branch libraries spread across the country. The UBL is said to be negotiating with this organisation with a view to establishing some form of partnership. The question was therefore designed to find out whether respondents have a branch of this library near their home or workplace. The purpose was to determine how useful the BNLS could be for the UB distance learners if and when collaboration took place. As expected, a majority of the respondents numbering

159 (57.8 percent) responded that there was a branch of BNLS in their area. A substantial number (109 or 39.6 percent) stated there was not. What is most disturbing is that there were some respondents whose answer was 'Don't know' to whether the BNLS had a branch library near them or not.

4.2.5.2 Treatment of students by libraries

FIGURE 22
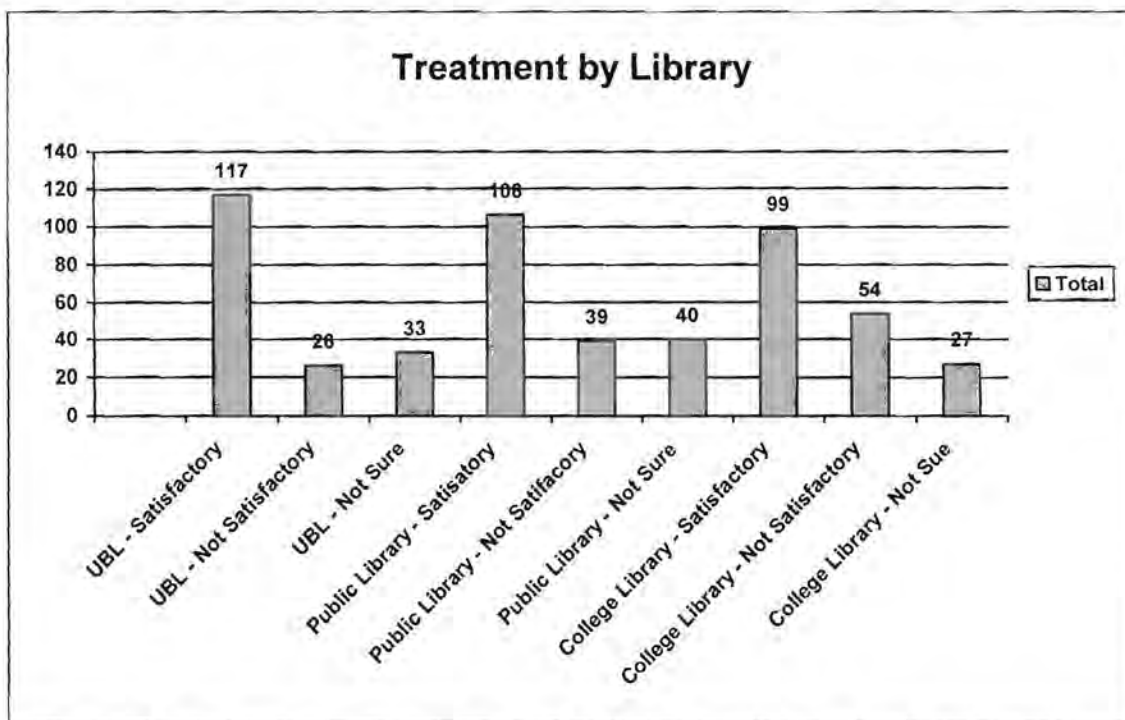
We wanted to ascertain the views of the students who were already using the library by asking them to rate their quality. The libraries the distance learners were using, as indicated in the questionnaires, were the UBL, the Public Library and the College of Education libraries. An option for 'others' was included, should there be any other library the students were using that we did not know of. For the rating, three options were provided. These included 'Satisfactory', 'Not satisfactory' and 'Not sure'. They did not have to limit their opinion to only one library. They could rate each one as long as they

patronise them. With regard to the UB Library, the 117 respondents who had used any of the branch libraries were satisfied with the treatment received. This forms 42.5 percent of all respondents and 59.7 percent of the number of respondents who had used a library for their course (See Figure 8). 26 respondents (9.5 percent) thought the treatment they received from the UBL or its branch libraries was not satisfactory, and 12 percent (33 respondents) ticked 'Not sure' as their response for the rating.

Regarding the public library, 106 respondents who had used the BNLS claimed they were satisfied with the treatment received. This represents 38.5 % of the total respondents and 54.1 percent of those who confirmed they had used library facilities for their course as shown in Fig. 8 above. 39 respondents (14.2 percent) indicated they were not satisfied with the treatment received, and 40 of the respondents (14.5 percent) were not sure about the treatment received.

With regard to the College Libraries, 99 respondents (36 percent) were satisfied with the treatment received, as patrons of a college library. Considering the total number of those who claimed they had used library facilities for their course, this figure represents 50.5 percent. 54 respondents (19.6 percent) felt they were not satisfied with the treatment received; and 27 respondents (9.8 percent) were neither not satisfied nor satisfied. They ticked 'not sure' as the preferred option for the treatment received in the course of their dealings with the college library.

4.2.5.3 Comments from respondents

In the questionnaire a space was provided for the respondents to make additional comments on anything they felt concerned about, but which the questionnaire did not address. While most of the respondents left the space blank, others took the opportunity to make comments. Altogether, some 67 respondents made submissions that were seen to be very pertinent. Their comments ranged from complaints, dilemmas they faced and appeals and suggestions about the difficulties distance learners experienced during their studies. For the sake of convenience, the various comments received were categorised under nine groupings, and these are presented below.

4.2.5.3.1 No library around

In this section, the respondents' various comments that centred around the lack of library facilities where they live or work are provided. The comments were as follows:

" I have not used the university library since it is far from my destination".

"I have never used any library".

"We should be able to borrow books at our schools which have enough information because we do not have libraries in our areas".

"The distance education gives me a lot of problem because I cannot study well because there is no library".

"Students failed because there are no library to assist".

"Try to provide materials to us who are in the rural areas".

"Students in remote areas are suffering. They need special treatment. It is strenuous to come to town from our rural areas for library service".

"I think it will be advisable to have at least a village reading room in my village where we will be able to go and study".

"Libraries should be built in our villages to reduce expenses on travelling".

"I have never used any library because my working place is far away from town where there is a library".

"I am far from all library centres and it is not easy for me to use any".

"Our modules should be supplied in time if there is no library".

"I have never used any of these libraries since they are not where I live".

"Please provide library service to us in remote areas".

"Arrange with Primary school in remote areas so that we can get library materials – we don't have library".

"We people living in rural areas have no access to any library. We only use our modules for our assignment. Then the tutors' comments are not favourable. They tell you "copy from modules". We don't have any library to do our research anywhere".

4.2.5.3.2 The National/Public library

Below are the respondents' comments that concern the Botswana National Library Service and its branch libraries. The BNLS is either referred to as the national or public library. Essentially the students either want the BNLS to establish branch libraries in their areas or have the existing ones equipped with materials that are relevant to them.

"There are not enough books at the library which I am to use. At the Public library I have not told them I am a D.E student".

"National library should be well equipped with enough materials for us to be able to get adequate materials".

"National library should be built in every sub-district and village reading rooms should have all the materials to cater for us".

"There is no relevant information for DPE students in Public library".

"There are no relevant books in BNLS for our use".

"Supply enough and relevant books to BNLS branch libraries for our use".

"The BNLS branch near my area does not have enough books to use for my assignment".

4.2.5.3.3 Establishing more libraries

The respondents' comments provided below relate to the provision of library services or the establishment of more libraries.

"It would be profitable if all districts have libraries for every distance learner to benefit".

"I need to have access to the library services so as to pass my course. Saturday use of the library is not enough".

4.2.5.3.4 Library opening hours

Some students apparently felt that the libraries should be more generous with their opening hours. The following comments were offered concerning this matter.

"Time doesn't favour us as full-time workers because library closes at 6.00p.m. On Saturdays they open for only 4 hours".

"CCE Francistown should not close early during vacation because distance learners don't go for vacation. So we need to use the library throughout especially in the evening".

4.2.5.3.5 Training

In their comments provided below, the respondents demonstrated the need for them to be adequately trained in library and information literacy skills, skills that involve the use of the computer and the Internet.

"We need training in use of library, computer, Internet. We need to be given time to study the use of the above not during residential time".

"Train us in the use of a computer".

"You should organize a workshop on how to use a library for us".

"There are many students who still need to be exposed to library research methods and skills".

"Library is very important for us distance learners. There is need for us to be taught how to use computer to search".

4.2.5.3.6 Book shortages

Comments were made on the shortage or non-availability of relevant materials for the use of the students in their various locations. These included:

"We should be provided with our own resource books".

"No reference books at the village libraries".

"In the library that I once visited there was a problem of shortage of books. The building was also too small to accommodate readers".

"At times you get to the library to see that you have wasted your money in coming from your village to the library in town".

"I use BNLS library in my village but the problem is shortage of books. It is not well equipped. The librarians there do understand our problem".

"Sometimes the books recommended for further reading are not available in public library".

"You cannot get the resource book that is needed since we are many who want to use the same book".

"The library has no books. Librarian failed to help you because of no materials or books".

4.2.5.3.7 Special arrangements

The comments below are appeals or suggestions made by the respondents for improving library services for them. Among others, suggestions were offered on places that could be used to provide them with library services in their remote areas.

"I suggest the university should look for a suitable library we should use near us".

"I would like to see distance learner given IDs for library like other students of the University so that we can borrow and use library freely".

"We must be attached to libraries in Community Junior Secondary schools near our working places".

"Libraries help a lot. All libraries should have the same facilities as that of the university".

"I would like to have access to the library so that I can research for my assignment".

"UB Library can supply Junior Secondary schools with books for us".

"The course is becoming difficult as I live far away and there is no library nearby. Arrangement should be made to cater for us".

"Distance learners should be transferred from places where there are no libraries to places where libraries are available".

"Books should be brought to schools we are teaching".

"Please provide resource books relevant to our course in nearby libraries".

"Supply book box with relevant books for those of us in the very remote areas to benefit from. We are really suffering".

"Provide books in primary school to help reduce weekend travels to libraries in town only to get there and find the libraries closed".

"I only use CJSS school library".

"Could you please make sure that these libraries are set up in rural areas to minimize long distance travel searching for library".

"We travel 220km to get to the nearest library using a lot of money. It will be fine if CJSS can be well equipped with relevant books for us".

"Mobile library should visit rural areas regularly to encourage those who live far away to read".

"There should be a mobile library to be used by distance learners. Many books should be supplied".

"Start mobile library service for distance learners"

"Make proper arrangement for us to use the library in rural areas".

"Books which supplement the modules should be sent to us in time in our stations".

"It cost us so much to get to the library from my village. There must be a library branch in Shakawe".

"All libraries should be equipped with distance education materials so as to cater for us".

4.2.5.3.8 Parity of treatment

The students apparently observed some degree of disparity in the treatment being meted out to them compared with their on-campus counterparts. They understandingly reported this in the following comments:

"We should be given the same type of treatment with other students in UB libraries".

"I have tried twice to register with the University Library without success. Membership should be made easy for us".

4.2.5.3.9 Other comments

The respondents' comments provided below take the form of excuses or reasons why some of them were not using the library facilities available.

> "Some of us as teachers are not allowed to go to the libraries by our school heads".

> "No time to search for information from the libraries or visit libraries".

> "Due to my workload I don't satisfactorily use the library".

4.3 ISSUES RAISED WITH THE DEU STAFF

4.3.1 THE NATURE AND TYPE OF COURSE MATERIAL PROVIDED

The first question put to the DEU staff asked them to give brief descriptions of the nature or type of course material provided for the distance learner. According to them, the type of course material provided was in the form of modules, manuscripts that have been completed, audio-tapes, radio scripts and other related items. They explained that in producing the course material the unit, through the subject co-ordinators, identified writers, editors and other part-time staff to develop material. A course team approach is used in the overall development of material, although individual writers have the responsibility of working on their own on the module or unit before passing it to the content editor, who examines it and returns it for correction. The document then goes back to the content editor. Next it is sent to the copy editor and to the graphic artist who deals with the illustrative work. After incorporating any comments and suggestions offered it goes for printing.

4.3.2 SELF-SUFFICIENCY OF STUDENTS' COURSE MATERIAL

The question was asked as to whether the course material given to students were entirely self sufficient to the degree that students did not have to use a library. The DEU staff maintained that, in distance education terminology, material given to students is "self-

contained". Thus, the material is complete. Nevertheless, they added that if any of the modules were checked, it would be observed that each has a 'further reading' section. This identifies chapters and pages of other texts to which students could refer to obtain further information. They added that students who sought additional reading matter were likely to be high achievers, and this separated them from the ordinary students. They believe that the average student should be able to achieve a pass without having to undertake extra reading. However, the units also include a range of activities aimed at 'activating the text' or, to put it in distance education language, 'making the text interactive'. This is a feature of the self-contained material provided on the UB distance-learning programmes. They maintained that a student would need to work hard on the material provided to be able to get a pass. On the whole they thought that the students were encouraged to use library facilities.

4.3.3 NUMBER OF GRADUATED STUDENTS FROM THE CAE AND DPE PROGRAMMES

The total number of students who have graduated from the CAE programme is about 315. As the programme is in the process of being phased out, the 18 students currently on the CAE programme are in their last year. The DPE programme is in its second year of operation. No students have, therefore, graduated from DPE programme to date. A total of 1,200 students have been admitted to the programme – 600 students for each of the two cohorts now enrolled.

4.3.4 NUMBER OF STUDY CENTRES IN PLACE FOR DEU PROGRAMMES

Currently only four Colleges of Education (Primary) in the country are being used as centres for the DPE programme. The DEU staff added that arrangements were on-going for the remaining two Colleges of Education (Secondary) to be used. For the CAE programme, only one centre currently exists, and this is in Gaborone. The DEU hopes to have more study centres located in secondary schools around the country for the DPE

students. They added that since the CAE programme is being phased out, there was no need to increase the number of study centres for students on this programme. Besides, at the request of the students, it was decided that those still on it be given the opportunity of meeting in one place occasionally. The DEU staff stated that they were still committed to increasing the number of study centres around the country. They added that this idea would be revived in future when new programmes by distance delivery mode are started.

4.3.5   EXPECTED PRODUCTS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

The DEU were questioned about the kind of products they expected from the distance education programmes of the university. They stated that they were looking forward to seeing individuals produced who would be able to effectively carry out their assignments and duties in their various organisations.

4.3.6   COMPARING DISTANCE LEARNERS WITH OTHER UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

As a follow up to the preceding question, the staff were asked their views on how distance learners compared with the rest of the university students. According to the DEU staff they claimed that in distance education, talking about parity of esteem was a common phenomenon. This meant that it was expected that their students' learning and teaching would be comparable to that of students in the conventional setting, if not better. They expected the distance learners, after graduating, to perform equally well if not better than their traditional counterparts.

4.3.7   PARITY OF TREATMENT OF THE UB DISTANCE LEARNERS WITH THEIR FACE-TO-FACE COUNTERPARTS

Since the DEU would want or expect the distance learners to perform as well as or better than conventional students, it was logical to ask them if the two categories of students were receiving equal treatment as far as academic work is concerned. The purpose of this question was to determine if the distance students were being adequately equipped to

perform on a par with their conventional colleagues. If the response was 'No', we wanted to know what features were inadequate. The responses of the staff to this question were 'yes' and 'no'.

In explaining their 'yes' response, the DEU staff claimed that better treatment was given to the distance learners because 'the modules given to them is better than the lecturer's notes'. In stating 'no' the DEU staff thought that as distance students they 'do their stuff through the back-door, they do not have the library for twenty-four hours a day'. They contended that distance students do not have counselling services in the same way that the face-to-face students have them. Other disadvantages that faced distance learners include the fact that they were far removed from their lecturers. They thereby miss the personal touch, warmth and interaction provided by face-to-face teaching throughout the entire period of study. Furthermore, distance students were unable to come together as they might wish to discuss matters as a group.

4.3.8   THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DEU AND THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

The DEU strongly believed that a good working relationship existed between them and the University Library. However, they complained that there had been some occasional gaps in communication between the two departments. They claimed that the University Library was usually invited to the discussions about the programmes offered by the DEU, in order to keep the library, among other stakeholders, abreast of the developments in the DEU.

4.3.9   PROBLEMS THAT DISTANCE STUDENTS EXPERIENCE

Apart from the problems identified in 4.3.7 above, when asked about the nature of problems confronting distance learners of the university, the DEU staff reiterated their belief that the problems highlighted by Dodds (1986) are the same as those being experienced by their distance learners. Among others, these included the following:

- The problem of the isolation of learners.

- The tendency of the learners to depend on rote learning.

- The possibility that the learners who undergo this programme might be stale.

- The possibility of attendant high drop out rate in some programmes.

4.3.10 DISTANCE STUDENTS' CONTACTS WITH THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

The question asked in this section dealt with the frequency that they thought their distance learners contacted the university library and the type of problems students faced in doing so. They felt they were unable to answer the question. However, they were aware that only a relatively insignificant few were going to the library regularly, and that those in remote areas might not be going to any library at all. According to them, the reasons why students would go to the library would be for information to write their assignments, and also to refer to materials recommended for further reading in their courses.

4.3.11 KNOWLEDGE OF WHETHER THE STUDENTS USE OTHER LIBRARIES

The DEU were asked whether or not they were aware that students make use of other libraries apart from the UBL. They claimed they actually encouraged them to use any library close to them. Since the residential programmes organised for the DPE students take place in institutions running a similar programme (that is in the Colleges of Education) they believed that the students used the libraries in those institutions, at least during the period of the residential programme. They also stated that arrangements had been put in place to ensure that libraries in these institutions operated longer opening hours during the residential programme, and that the librarians in these Colleges were paid overtime for working during the residential programme. With this structure in place, they concluded that the students had to be using other libraries apart from the UBL. They

also said that both the CAE and DPE students were encouraged to use BNLS library branches close to where they live or work.

4.3.12 EXTENT TO WHICH STUDENTS USE OTHER LIBRARIES

The DEU were unable to make a categorical statement on the extent to which their distance learners use other libraries. They thought that opening hours were normally extended for the students to use the libraries during the residential programme, for which the librarians were paid overtime. They could only hope that the students made judicious use of these facilities that were being paid for while they were on the residential programme.

4.3.13 INVOLVEMENT OF THE LIBRARY IN THE PLANNING AND THINKING OF THE DEU

The purpose of asking this question was to see if we could determine the extent of the relationship existing between the DEU and the library, and the degree to which the library is involved in the plans and thinking of the DEU. Information was also sought as to how the involvement has assisted the library in drawing up their plans and strategies for providing library and information services for distance learners. The response elicited was that the library was not always adequately involved in the thinking and planning of the DEU. While they were 'not sure of where to lay the blame', it was suggested that this could be an oversight on the part of the DEU.

4.3.14 CHANGE IN THE PRESENT STRUCTURE AND PROCEDURES OF THE DEU

As to what should be changed in the present structure and procedures of the DEU, the DEU staff argued that the perception of the community should be positive toward programmes being delivered by the distance delivery mode. They were also convinced that the unit needs a strong research and training base to keep the Unit aware of current

and successful practices elsewhere. They also wanted to see an environment that was self-contained in terms of availability of materials and people to work in it. Finally they identified the need to acquire leadership skills that would ensure that the DEU are respected for their academic prowess within the context of a university and tertiary education.

4.3.15 WHY THE CAE PROGRAMME IS BEING PHASED OUT

It has been noted that one of the programmes currently being run by distance delivery mode, the CAE, is in the process of being phased out. The current students are the last cohort of the programme, and are in their last year. In only a few more months they finish, and the CAE programme will cease to exist. We wanted to know why the Distance Education Unit was phasing out the programme. According to the DEU staff, the original client, the Department of Non-formal Education (DNFE), that sponsored the students on this programme, was raising the entry requirement for their Department. They explained that the lowest qualification for entry to the DNFE is now the Diploma in Adult Education. It was therefore decided to phase out the CAE programme and introduce the Diploma in Adult Education (DAE) programme instead. They added that other potential clients had agreed to this decision.

4.3.16 DROP-OUT RATE FROM THE CAE AND DPE PROGRAMMES

Information was sought on the drop-out rate from the CAE and DPE programmes, and what accounted for it. This question was asked to see if the problem of dropping-out could in any way be related to the provision or non-provision of library services to the students, especially those in remote locations. While the actual figures for drop out could not be established, the DEU staff claimed that the number was usually very small and constituted a low percentage of those enrolled.

With regard to the question as to what accounted for failure or dropping out, the DEU staff thought that this might be the rigour of the system for the DPE students, plus the fact

that some drop out because they have received sponsorship from the Government to attend a full-time programme elsewhere. With respect to the CAE programme, they thought that the growing incidence of self-sponsorship by students is creating its own problem. They affirmed again that the number is small. There have also been a few deaths.

4.3.17 FURTHER AREAS IDENTIFIED

To identify issues that might not have been mentioned but are pertinent to the topic, and in order to give the DEU staff the opportunity to air their views and opinions, it was decided to ask if there were any further aspects they would like to bring to the attention of the researcher. In response to this, the first suggestion offered was concerning the library. They wished to ensure that the librarians handling distance learners were exposed to appropriate training through conferences, seminars and workshops on this new aspect of librarianship. They believed that attendance at international conferences would enable the librarians to be exposed to and learn from their colleagues handling library and information services for this category of students in other parts of the world. They thought that the University library should also establish links with other related institutions, both within and outside the country. They suggested that the university library would also benefit from partnership with other libraries in the country. They also hinted that the DEU was expected to start using high technology soon with the introduction of a University-wide video conferencing facility. They made an appeal to both the university community and the general public not to see distance education as second rate education, but as a viable complement to the existing systems – one that makes use of the best available methods, media, personnel and resources to achieve excellence.

4.4 ISSUES DISCUSSED WITH THE LIBRARIANS

4.4.1 UTILISATION OF AVAILABLE LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES BY DISTANCE LEARNERS

Although the library may provide resources and services, it is not always the case that those for whom they are made available will use them. This led us to ask the librarians in charge of the distance learners whether or not the services and resources that the library provide for the distance learners were being utilised by them. In the responses to the questions asked, it became clear that the distance learners were not adequately utilising the resources and services available to them.

4.4.2 DISPARITY IN THE SERVICE RENDERED TO DISTANCE LEARNERS AND TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

The response of the library staff as to whether or not there should be any disparity in the services rendered to distance learners and their counterparts in the face-to-face system was that the most difficult customers of a library to satisfy, particularly in a dual-mode environment, were distance learners. They traced the reason for this assertion to the way programmes had to be delivered to distance learners. Distance learners were usually spread all over the country, and some of the very remotest areas were not within easy reach. They added that it was the fact that the students were very widely dispersed that caused them to be the most difficult customers of the library to deal with. They disclosed that it was the wish of the library to provide easy accessibility to the library facilities of the University to this group of people. They stated that there should be no disparity in the services rendered to distance learners and the traditional students. They added that justice and equity demanded that the two groups of students should be treated equally. They confessed, however, that the reality was that a wide gap existed between the treatment given to the conventional students and that offered to the distance learners.

4.4.3   HOW THE LIBRARY PROVIDES ITS SERVICES TO DISTANCE LEARNERS

Knowing the nature of distance education, we asked the librarians how the library provides its services to distance learners, particularly those in the remote areas. The librarians claimed that they took the advantage of the efficient telephone service in the country to the maximum. This efficient telephone facility is also available in the villages across the country. It was therefore not too problematic for students to get in touch with the library from their remote areas. Material could be posted to the students directly, or to the nearby BNLS branch library from where the students could collect them. Such material, according to the librarians, could be returned in a similar fashion. They also felt that they were already informally taking advantage of the BNLS that has its branches spread all over the country. In doing this the requests made by the distance learners through the BNLS branch libraries were normally attended to in the form of inter-library loans that could be sent to any of the UB branch libraries. Apart from getting in touch with the library by telephone, the students were also given the fax number of all the library branches. It was possible for library staff to use fax machines in their offices to make their requests. They observed that the students who had access to email could also make their requests through this facility.

4.4.4   SERVICES AVAILABLE TO TRADITIONAL STUDENTS BUT NOT TO THE DISTANCE LEARNERS

A question was asked that dealt with the differential treatment meted out to distance learners and the traditional students. We wanted to know the extent to which distance learners were disadvantaged. The question asked was which services were available to the traditional students that were not available to the distance learners. In their response the librarians observed that through living on campus or being on a face-to-face programme, conventional students enjoyed great advantages over their distance-learning counterparts in many areas. For instance, it was easy for the traditional students to consult with their subject librarians without having to pay the telephone bill; they could use many methods and formats to retrieve whatever information they needed; they did not have to

depend on someone else to do their searching for them. They declared that they had easy access to the facilities such as the Internet and email, and that they did not experience any delay in obtaining information needed. This was not so with the distance learners who are at the mercy of the post and telecommunication systems through which material is sent to them. They also thought that all students of the university, except the distance learners, participated in the information literacy skills (ILS) programme that was being taught as a credit-earning course to the face-to-face students. They regretted that, important as the ILS course was, it was not yet introduced to distance learners of the University. One other advantage that the traditional students had was that they were made aware of current services available to them. The librarians explained that they compiled lists of new books and made photocopies of the contents pages of journals on subscription. These were circulated to inform students of the new arrivals and material in the library.

4.4.5   NATURE OF THE PROBLEMS THAT DISTANCE STUDENTS EXPERIENCE

We wanted to know whether the library was aware of the problems confronting distance learners. The respondents were asked what kind of problems the distance learners had. The librarians enumerated a number of problems they knew that the learners could be encountering. These, according to them, included that they did not receive responses to their requests in timely fashion, that they were unable to consult with their subject librarians without having to pay for telephone calls, and that they could not adequately conduct literature searches. Another problem was the distances many had to travel to get to the UBL or any of the branch libraries or, in some cases, even the BNLS library that has several branches spread all over the country. They also mentioned the fact that the UBL had yet to finalise special arrangements for them to use other libraries. This caused problems for the students. Finally, distance students had great difficulty in gaining access to the Internet, and this was another problem they were facing.

4.4.6 DISTANCE STUDENTS' CONTACT WITH THE LIBRARY

In responding to the question as to how often the distance learners contacted the library, the librarians stated that those living near the UBL or one of its branches did not have any problem. Students in these areas could go to the library as often as they wished. Where problems arose mostly, according to library staff, was how to provide service for the students in rural areas. They regretted that necessary infrastructures were not in place yet to do this or to monitor them. However, they were aware that the students visited public libraries nearest to them. They thought that the students went to the library mostly during their leave and holidays. For those who live in areas where there is a UB library, they often visited it after school hours.

On the question about the type of problems the students brought to the library, the staff stated that they ranged from how to get materials for further reading or to write their assignment, to such problems as that there were not enough copies of certain books. With regard to those in the rural areas and places far removed from the UB branch libraries, they thought that such students often complained that the public libraries they used did not stock materials that were relevant for their use. In addition, they complained that when materials were requested through inter-library loans it often took a long time for the materials to arrive and sometimes would not arrive at all.

4.4.7 STATISTICS OF REQUESTS FOR BOOKS, ARTICLES AND OTHER MATERIALS BY DISTANCE LEARNERS

On the question of whether there were any statistics on the requests made for books, articles and other materials by the distance learners, the librarians stated that no separate statistics were kept for the distance learners. They added that they did not want to see different treatment of the two groups of students, the traditional and the non-traditional students. However, they stated that plans were being made to collect separate statistics for the two groups of students as it had become necessary.

4.4.8   KNOWLEDGE OF WHETHER THE STUDENTS MAKE USE OF OTHER LIBRARIES

The response to the question as to whether the library staff knew that the students made use of other libraries was in the affirmative. Specifically, they mentioned that they used the BNLS that has branch libraries in various places in the country.

4.4.9   EXTENT TO WHICH STUDENTS USE OTHER LIBRARIES

When the librarians were asked whether they knew the extent to which the students use other libraries, they were unable to say precisely. They thought it natural for the students to look for information and necessary assistance when they had assignments to complete. They also expected them to use the libraries nearest to them during the weekends, since the students had time to spare for studies at weekends. In practice they mostly sought materials and books that were listed for further reading at the end of each unit of their modules.

4.4.10   COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE DEU AND THE LIBRARY ON THE THINKING OF THE DEU

The respondents were asked if the library received adequate information on the thinking of the DEU in relation to their programmes. The response to this question was both 'yes' and 'no'. According to the library staff there were some issues about which the library was adequately informed. However, there were many other salient issues that the library ought to be informed about but, either by commission or omission, the DEU did not provide the information expected. They thought that the Library had initiated a number of meetings with the DEU to ensure that there was an adequate flow of information and that the library was acquainted with the way the DEU operated and what it was planning. This view appears to coincide with that expressed by the DEU staff, who informed the researcher that the library was not always adequately involved in the thinking and planning of the DEU. This was in response to the similar question posed to the DEU staff. The librarians thought that they were not getting maximum cooperation from the DEU. However, they did state that the DEU was gradually improving in these matters.

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4.4.11 REGULARITY AND ADEQUACY OF INTERACTION BETWEEN THE DEU AND THE LIBRARY

The respondents were asked how regular and adequate the interaction was between the DEU and the library. The response was that there was no fixed schedule as to when the two departments met. Meetings were arranged on the initiative of either of the two parties, depending on who wished to raise and discuss an issue. The librarians thought that the library, after the restructuring that recently took place, now had a unit called Customer and Extension Services (CES), headed by a deputy director. This is the unit now responsible for dealing with the DEU. Since its inauguration the CES, they maintained, had been in constant touch with the DEU to discuss how best to serve the distance learners of the university.

4.4.12 LIBRARY PLANS FOR DISTANCE LEARNERS

When asked of the plans the library was considering putting in place for distance learners, the librarians suggested the following list:

4.4.12.1 Document delivery

The Customer and Extension Services, through the Inter-library Loans unit, promised to meet requests for articles by students and for those recommended by their tutors. A form has been designed for this purpose.

4.4.12.2 Literature search

The library would provide literature searches from relevant databases in the library on specific project topics on behalf of the students, as soon as the library was notified of the request.

4.4.12.3 Library orientation

The library would provide general library orientation and other services that would equip the distance learners with the skills to use any library with ease.

4.4.12.4 Web OPAC

Adequate training on remote access on Web OPAC would be provided for those who have access to the Internet.

4.4.12.5 Contents pages of journals

This service involves photocopying of the Contents Pages from a selected list of journals and sending them to the students. Students would be encouraged to identify from the list relevant articles, which the library would photocopy from the local collection or obtain through the inter-library loans system. The cooperation of the tutors was also expected in identifying relevant journal titles, which the library would scan for the table of contents.

4.4.12.6 Postal service

A postal service with the expenses borne by the library is to be put in place for registered distance-learning students. They might have to pay for the return of the items posted to them. Bibliographies will be compiled using the OPAC and sent to some selected locations across the country.

4.4.12.7 Reference/Enquiries

Telephone requests for information would continue to be dealt with. Similarly, enquiries and reference questions would also be attended to in person, by e-mail, by fax, or by post.

It is understood that the students would be informed about all the library services available to them at the time of registering. Forms would, at the same time, be handed out so that they would be able to order materials from the library or obtain photocopies.

4.4.13 THE PERCEPTION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION AS CURRENTLY PROVIDED BY THE UB

In a bid to let the librarians air their views on the present procedures of the provision of distance education at the University of Botswana, they were asked about their perception of the present mode of providing distance education. According to the librarians they believed that though a great deal had been done, so much more was necessary. They recommended that the DEU should be more responsive to other University sections such as the UBL. They believed that much still needed to be done in their marketing strategy. Besides, the major stakeholders, like the library should be properly and adequately involved in distance education. They advocated for more university-wide consultation by the DEU.

4.4.14 PRODUCTS EXPECTED FROM THE DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMMES OF THE UB

When the librarians were asked as to the kind of products they expected from the distance education programmes of the UB, they expected a well-finished product. They added that the UB is not the first institution to be involved in distance learning. They quoted other well-established institutions, even within the Southern African region, where programmes are run via the distance delivery mode and the products of the institutions concerned have been tested and found adequate. They felt that the products they expect from the distance education programme of the UB should also be the same good human resource material.

4.4.15 HOW THE DISTANCE LEARNERS COMPARE WITH OTHER UNIVERSITY GRADUATES

The librarians' response as to how the distance learners should compare with the rest of the University graduates was simple. They thought that they should compare well with them.

4.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Primarily, the purpose of this chapter was to obtain the views of the subjects on their involvement with the library and its services in relation to the distance-learning programme offered by the University of Botswana. The subjects involved were the distance-learning students of the present two programmes delivered by distance mode by the university. Others were the providers of the programme, and the staff of the university library. This is the agency that provides library and information services for the distance learners of the University.

The author was particularly pleased that the results of his investigation supported the hypotheses formulated in Chapter One, and that the research discussion proceeded as envisioned. We were able to appreciate the dilemmas and difficulties of the students, particularly those who live a long way from the library. It is apparent that the involvement of, and the accessibility to, the library plays a significant role in distance learning, and that non-accessibility of students to a library makes them feel very much disadvantaged. It is evident from the accounts given by the students that many had to depend solely on the notes and modules given to them to write assignments and prepare for examinations. Unfortunately, relying completely on these notes and modules resulted in critical comments from their tutors who often 'reprimand' them for depending on the modules only for doing their assignments. It was also observed with regret that some of them require up to two days travel to get to the nearest UB Library branch. While some of them found material and resources in public libraries, there is a problem of a lack of relevant materials for their use in these libraries. To compound the problem, they were concerned that the University Library did not make any special arrangements for them to use even the national libraries.

Whilst the University Library may be advantaged by the availability of computer mediated infrastructures like the Internet, the distance education students lack such facilities not only at home but also at their workplaces. Indeed the vast majority of the

students did not even have a basic knowledge of the computer and its associated resources, including the Internet. Thus great difficulty is experienced because they can neither access university library catalogues nor enjoy easy contact with their library via such facilities as email, for example. Their overwhelmingly disadvantaged position makes them feel the great disparity that exists between them and the traditional students. There is a large gap in the way the two groups are treated by the University library. However, from the information elicited from both the DEU and Library staff, it is acknowledged that a great deal still needs to be done.

From the research findings and the discussion of them in this chapter, it is evident that some critical challenges have been identified. However, it is not enough to simply identify these challenges; concrete action must be taken. Therefore, the next chapter, which concludes the study, offers recommendations on what could be done, and the direction to take, and a roadmap is provided for getting there.

CHAPTER FIVE

5   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   INTRODUCTION

As stated in Chapter one, the main purpose of this study was to examine the involvement of the library of the University of Botswana in the distance education programmes of the university, to see if there is room for improvement in the service rendered, and to offer suggestions for better services to distance learners. In pursuance of this goal some objectives and hypotheses were formulated (as noted in chapter one), a review of literature was undertaken and questionnaires were used as tools or instruments of research. This was demonstrated in chapters two and three respectively. This chapter is concerned with bringing together the trends that have emerged from the study. On the basis of the results of this study, the most important conclusions are identified, some implications noted and major recommendations made.

5.2   CONCLUSION

It was noted in the last chapter that there are many perspectives from which problems could be perceived. The study has highlighted some issues on students' personal information relating to their studies. These indicated that a vast majority of the students live or work in rural areas that are far beyond easy reach of libraries (See Chapter 4.2.1.4 under 'Place and location of work'). It is also worthy of note to remember that some of the distance learners not only switch between work and study, they also have physical disabilities that make it even more difficult for them to get to a library. The study discussed students' library utilisation patterns. Issues raised included: whether or not they felt the need to supplement the course materials provided with additional reading matter; the extent to which they used the library and whether they did so; the reasons for using a library; and the library training they had received. The study also attempted to shed light

on whether the distance learners were familiar with the university library. For instance, most of the responses to the questions dealing with the distance between where they lived to the nearest UBL branch, and whether any special arrangements were made for them to use the library and get access to the knowledge of subject librarians, indicated that the UB distance learners are strangers to a library environment that is supposed to be familiar to them. As if this was not enough, distance students have little knowledge of the modern information and communication technology systems that could be used to access library databases, or to use the email facilities to get in touch with their subject librarians from a distance. Very few of the students who responded know about, or have access to, computer Internet facilities whether at home, at work or elsewhere.

Realising their predicament the students could not but draw attention to their situation in which they did not have easy access to an adequately equipped library. Whilst some of them undertook a long trek to the widespread public libraries, more often than not they were frustrated because they were unable to get relevant materials for their courses and assignments. This is because public libraries are not properly equipped to meet the kind of demands being placed on them by distance university students.

As far as the DEU was concerned, the study also underscored the held view that though the students were given self-contained course materials and modules, tutors encouraged them to use library facilities to supplement these. However, the majority of students did not find libraries that took care of their needs in the remote locations where they lived or worked. Consequently, they had to make use of the course materials given to them to write assignments and prepare for examinations. It was also noted during the researcher's interviews with the DEU staff that, either through oversight or deliberately, the library was not normally involved in the thinking and planning of the DEU. This assertion was corroborated during the discussion with the librarians. Despite this the DEU expects the distance learners to achieve as well as, if not better than, the rest of the university graduates.

With regard to interaction with the library, the study reflected the librarians' belief in providing equity of service and that there be no disparity in the treatment of distance learners and their traditional counterparts. Yet many gaps were perceived in the present handling of the two groups as the librarians described the services that the traditional students currently enjoy that are not available to distance learners. Despite these inadequacies, the librarians desired that the products of distance education would compare favourably with their face-to-face colleagues being taught face-to-face who presently appear to receive better treatment. The librarians wanted this in spite of their in-depth appreciation of the problems confronting the distance .

In the various areas that this study covered, there is no doubting the fact that whilst there were encouraging situations, some disturbing features were noted in some other areas. In the light of the above, it is clear that every effort must be made to offer adequate solutions, as a number of areas require attention. These areas were identified by the library staff, the students, and the DEU - the providers of distance education programmes at the university. The findings, therefore, call for urgent, holistic and targeted efforts to ensure that adequate infrastructures are put in place.

5.3   IMPLICATIONS

This section is concerned with bringing together some developments that have emerged from this study. These form the groundwork that leads to the recommendations of this study. What follows, therefore, is a brief discussion of the implications of the research findings and a discussion of the literature review, which also formed a part of the methodology adopted for this research. The implications are divided into groups as stated below:

5.3.1   IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS ON THE ROLE OF THE LIBRARY

This study has examined the responsibility and role of the library in the distance-learning programme of the University of Botswana. This has provided an understanding of what the role of the library was and is, what the library has done on the one hand, and what the feelings of the students are about the facilities and services put in place by the library, on the other. This, in turn, has provided a concrete base from which recommendations can be made. The findings supported one of the hypotheses: that the involvement of the library plays a significant role in distance learning, and that the inability of distance learners to have easy access to library facilities would have a negative impact on the performance of students. An example would be appropriate here. Some respondents claimed that they were denied high marks because they could only 'regurgitate' what they read from their course modules when writing assignments, since they did not have a library available to provide them with additional sources of information. The majority of the respondents made it clear that they were willing to use library facilities if they were available.

5.3.2   IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS ON NON-AVAILABILITY OF ADEQUATE BRANCH LIBRARIES AND COMPUTER MEDIATED FACILITIES FOR DISTANCE LEARNERS

The findings show that the UB branch libraries are located in only two cities in the country. The way this affects the scattered distance learners has been analysed and discussed. Coupled with this is the non-availability or non-provision of adequate modern technology (such as the Internet) in strategic locations across the country that could be used by the distance learners.

The second hypothesis of this study is supported by the findings: distance learners of the university are further disadvantaged because of the absence of branch libraries and necessary computer-based infrastructures (including Internet facilities) in many parts of

the country. When Internet facilities are not readily available, difficulty is experienced by distance learners in gaining access to the university library web-page. The challenge here is to seize the opportunity and develop the necessary strategies and infrastructures aimed at facilitating a better support service to the distance learners who are scattered across the country.

5.3.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The enormous value of the WWW or the Internet in the provision of library and information services to distance learners has been amply demonstrated in the review of the literature. It was argued that the converging technologies, the rapid development and widespread acceptance of the Internet, and the application of the World Wide Web in education have created a lasting impact on the development of distance education programmes in the last decade. It was also seen that the technologies have also revolutionised the dispensation of library and information services within the same period. Examples were given of some institutions where these modern technologies were being applied in library and information services to the great advantage of distance learners.

The third hypothesis of the study is corroborated by the findings. This stated that the advent of the World Wide Web is having a major impact on library and information distribution particularly to distance learners. This ICT has not been fully exploited to the advantage of the distance learners of the University of Botswana. Though available at the University of Botswana Library and the branch libraries, no effort is apparently being made to put these infrastructures in place to the advantage of distance learners. In expressing their wish to know how to use a computerised library system, the distance learners have clearly indicated that special training should be organised for them.

5.3.4 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.3.4.1 The DEU and the Library

In the light of the insistence of both the DEU and the library that they expected the products of the distance education programme of the University to be as good as, if not better than, other graduates of the university, in fairness the two departments must not ignore the problems confronting distance students. A great deal of responsibility, therefore, rests squarely on the shoulders of the two departments to ensure maximum cooperation with one another. The question of the right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing should not arise. A situation where one department has, either consciously or unconsciously, failed to carry the other along greatly disadvantages these students.

5.3.4.2 The University of Botswana library

Any conceptual plan of action by the UB Library to take its services to the doorsteps of the distance-learning students of the university should take into account the potential invaluable collaborative or joint role that can be undertaken with other similar institutions within the country.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section attempts to provide recommendations based on the entire study. It is made up of four sections. One section provides some guidelines to the distance learners, the second presents some suggestions to the DEU - the unit charged with the responsibility of taking the university to the people. Another section is devoted to the Library - the department that has the responsibility of providing library and information support services to the scattered off-campus students. The last section offers concluding remarks.

5.4.1 DISTANCE LEARNERS

5.4.1.1 Development of reading culture

Even though the employment status of the respondents indicated that there was not one of them without a job, there were at least 15 of the respondents (see Figure 3) who stated that they were engaged in part-time employment. What is surprising is that despite the fact that at least eleven of this group live in towns or close to the UBL, only two of them claimed that they visit the library once a week. The rest visit either once a month or once in three months. Besides, as seen in Figure 9, the extent of library use is not encouraging. There were some respondents who believe that the modules or course materials given to them were sufficient, and that there was no need for any additional or supplementary reading (Figure 7). Even then, there were indications that some of the respondents who live or work in urban centres where the university has a branch library claimed they did not have time to visit the library. All this boils down to the absence of a reading culture. It is therefore important that the students themselves cultivate the habit of developing a reading culture.

5.4.1.2 Purpose of using the library

It was noted that the students understanding of purpose for which they could use the library was mainly to read and see if they could access prescribed or recommended materials. Only relatively few visit the library for other very useful purposes like research, to use computer or to surf the Internet. As noted in Figure 10, only a handful of the respondents – 24 (8.7 percent) maintained that they make use of reprographic (photocopying) services in the library. Using a computer in the library was the activity that had the least adherents among the respondents (see Figure 10). It is strongly recommended that there is a need for students to know and be familiar with uses of the library other than for reading material suggested in the modules given to them.

5.4.1.3   Knowledge of ICT

We are now living in a world where there is rapid evolution in the new global information infrastructure, where the old order of producing materials in print form is gradually giving way to the proliferation of digital resources. Barnard (1999) wrote that, "even these digital media have quickly moved from stand-alone CD-ROMs to local area networks within libraries, then to campus-wide area networks, and finally to World Wide Web sites on the Internet". This aptly describes the situation at the University of Botswana Library. What is worrisome is that despite the fact that the distance students are aware that many of the services of the UB library are available in digital form, they nevertheless show little or no enthusiasm to acquire the necessary skills that will make them functional in this environment. For instance, Figure 16 shows that only 12 (4.4 percent) of the respondents have knowledge of the Internet. Apparently no effort has been made by the distance learners to respond to the demands of modern technology. Indeed, when asked, many of them did not know whether there was an Internet café in their locality or not. In the light of the above it is important to let the students know that they can enjoy their studies more, and obtain adequate or better support services as distance learners if they offer themselves for training in the use of these technologies.

5.4.1.4   Use of other libraries

It is surprising to note that a significant number of the respondents had never used any library. Their excuse was that there was no library available where they lived. Figure 8 indicates that 28.7 percent of the respondents reported that they had never used any library facilities. Some of them have been studying for up to two years, yet they claimed it had not been possible for them to visit a library even once. Even though the UBL or its branch libraries may be at a distance from where many of these students live, some other libraries, especially the Botswana National Library Service, has more than twenty branches spread across the country and offer free services that the students could use even on weekends. In addition, there is an existing alliance between the UBL and the

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College of Education libraries. Being affiliated institutions to the University of Botswana, it is possible for the distance learners to use the facilities in these college libraries, most of which stock materials relevant to distance education courses.

5.4.2 DISTANCE EDUCATION UNIT

In the light of our findings from the study the following recommendations may be pertinent for the DEU to take cognisance of.

5.4.2.1 Clear policy on the use of the Library

One of the issues that came up in the study that calls for further clarification was the use of the library by distance learners. The respondents were asked whether it was a clearly stated requirement of their course that they should make use of libraries. Even though a majority of the students answered "yes", some of them offered "no", or that they "don't know". There should be no reason for confusion. The erroneous impression that they do not have to use the library, probably accounts for much of the reason why some students were not eager to use library facilities. The DEU policy should be very clear on this, and the students should be informed.

5.4.2.2 Opening of study centres

At present there seem to be no study centres. Our discussions with the DEU revealed that what is in place are the occasional residential programmes for the distance learners. It is also significant that there are hardly any residential programmes for distance learners that take place on the UB campus or any of the satellite campuses. This completely rules out the idea of the students visiting their university campus and interacting with any of the support units like the library and counselling services. Apart from the fact that students would have the advantage of coming together more frequently to discuss and share views thereby offsetting isolation, it would also facilitate bringing a human face to a seemingly anonymous form of education, since tutors would also be at the study centres to meet

their students. In addition, it would be possible for the library, too, to make more formal arrangements about seeing and giving more and better services to the students.

5.4.2.3 Harmonious relationships with the UBL

Though this is further discussed under the 'Partnership with faculty' section below, it is important to stress here that there is need for both the DEU and the Library to see each other as members of the same team whose unity and harmonious relationship would benefit them, and work to the advantage of their distance customers. The results of this study suggest that proper coordination on the thinking and planning of programmes does not take place between the two departments. Either by commission or omission, the Library is not involved in some issues when it should be. The Library should not have to seek information from the DEU: the DEU should volunteer the information. Indeed, the Library should not be kept in the dark as to what is going on in the DEU as far as the distance programmes are concerned. The Library should be represented in most of the meetings that the DEU holds. The DEU should regard the Library as a partner, especially in providing distance education.

5.4.3 LIBRARY

The results of this study have revealed that the University of Botswana Library still has a lot to do in order that distance learners of the university do not feel estranged from its operations and services. In this context the following suggestions are offered for consideration.

5.4.3.1 Establishment of satellite branch libraries

Distance education has demonstrated that it is a form of education that knows no boundary in terms of where the student could live to undertake his studies. Unlike the

traditional system where students are confined in a face-to-face dialogue with the teacher, and where students are free at any time during the opening hours to walk into the library to obtain what he wants and to meet his subject librarian, the situation is different in distance learning. It is known that whilst distance learning appeals to people in urban or metropolitan areas, it also has many adherents in rural areas. The findings in this research, as shown in Figure 4, have established that a vast majority of UB distance learners work or live in rural areas. It was recorded that 237 respondents (86.2 percent) live or work in the rural areas, while the rest live in urban centres.

In contrast, the two main branches of the University Library are in the cities and they are far removed in most cases from where the majority of students live. When asked for the distance, and the travelling time to get to the nearest UB branch library, the responses were as varied as they were disturbing. In some cases the distances are between 1000 and 1300 kilometres, and in some instances it could take up to two days to reach a library. To find out whether library services would be needed or not, students were asked whether they felt the need to supplement the course materials provided with additional reading. An overwhelming 217 respondents (78.9 percent) wrote they felt the need 'a great deal', and 46 respondents (16.7 percent) 'just a little'. Only 12 respondents (4.4 percent) thought 'not at all'. In other words, as many as 263 respondents (95.6 percent) felt the need in one way or another to supplement the provided course materials with additional reading.

Even when those who had not been using any library facilities were asked if they expected to use the library in future for their course, 72 out of 79 respondents (91.1 percent) in this group answered 'Yes' (see Figure 11). These findings suggest that only the library can satisfy the demand for further reading on the part of the distance learners.

In order to adequately satisfy the needs of and to cater for these students the UBL should, apart from going into partnership with other libraries (see below), expand by putting up more satellite branch libraries around the country. Not all these branch libraries have to be big or staffed with a large number of personnel, but they do need to be equipped with good communication facilities. Such a step would be particularly appropriate, now that it

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has been confirmed that the DEU is committed towards substantially increasing the number of programmes and courses being run by the distance-learning mode.

5.4.3.2 Training for students

While comparing information searching in the traditional printed sources with a computerised based system, Terena and Margaret Isaacs (2000) declared that, "with traditional printed sources, the main requirement for information searching was knowledge of where to look". Whereas with computerised bibliographic databases, they wrote that, "focus shifted to the techniques for searching them, from *where* to the *how*". They hinted that as a result of the massive array of services available in the library on-line resources, effective searching would require both a mastery of techniques and knowledge of sources. To obtain these the students would need adequate training and orientation.

In the bid to determine the training need, respondents were asked whether they had training in the use of libraries as part of their course or not. 133 of the respondents (48.4 percent) claimed they had not received any training, while 142 (51.6 percent) stated that they had. Even then, a high proportion of those who responded "yes' disclosed that the training received was not thorough. Some stated that they were trained during an orientation programme organised for them when they registered, and others said that they received their training outside the university from the public library they used. It is suffice to say that even in a manually operated library, there is need to educate users on the modes of operation in the library. This is even more important in a library environment that is fully automated or assisted by computerisation.

Similarly to Appleton (1993) at the University of Queensland in Australia, this study also investigated access by electronic means to library resources for distance learners, and their ability to deal with the technology required for this access. The results indicated that only 12 out of 275 respondents (4.4 percent) asserted that they had knowledge of the Internet (Figure 16), while only 7 respondents (2.5 percent) had access to the Internet at

home, at work or elsewhere (Figure 17). This picture poses the serious challenge that the library has to face if the distance learners of the University of Botswana are to be properly trained and updated to effectively utilise the library and information support services.

In order for these students to be operational in any library environment - be it a manually operated system or one driven by technology - and in order for them to acquire a mastery of the techniques and knowledge of sources to operate on their own in any library, they must be exposed to proper and adequate training. Only this can ensure their effective utilisation of the library.

5.4.3.2.1 Teaching of information literacy skills

Extensive attention has been paid to the teaching of information literacy skills (ILS) in the literature review. At the University of Botswana the teaching and learning of ILS is compulsory for both library staff and enrolled students. Apparently one of the issues that may determine how the distance learners will compare with their on-campus counterparts are their information and literacy skills. Admittedly, the teaching of ILS by the librarians is bound to pose a challenge to the librarians bearing in mind the fact that the students – the distance learners, are out of sight. But then, as highlighted in the section "Distance education and teaching" in chapter one librarians too should take up the challenge and work out how to teach ILS at a distance, just as other courses have to be taught in modular format to distance learners.

5.4.3.2.2 Brief curriculum outlines

In the light of what has been found out about the distance learners who are the primary subjects in this study, it is appropriate to highlight some areas in which the students might be given training for them to be more effective in the use of the library. Apart from the fact that the students will need to have knowledge of word processing, special focus in

the following areas is considered necessary for them to make full use of the electronic information available.

5.4.3.2.2.1 Information concept and skills

- Information concept and definition
- Information format: printed, non-printed and electronic
- CD-ROM databases and other electronic databases
- Local area network and network resources

5.4.3.2.2.2 Library organisation

- Organization of Information
- Library and library organisation (classification systems: including DDC and LC)
- The University of Botswana Library collection

5.4.3.2.2.3 Information access tools

- Library Catalogues
- On-line public access catalogue (OPAC)
- Bibliographies
- Reference materials: concept, general and specialised reference sources
- Inter-library loans

5.4.3.2.2.4 Electronic communication

- Electronic mail
- Receiving and opening an e-mail message
- Replying and forwarding an e-mail message
- Creating a new message
- Sending e-mail with attachments and spell checking
- Highlighting and deleting material such as an e-mail message

- Creating mailing lists

5.4.3.2.2.5 The WWW/Internet

- Web browsers, such as Internet Explorer and Netscape Communicator etc.
- Search engines and searching strategies
- Uniform resource locator (URL or Web address) and pathnames
- Bookmark
- Text and hypertext
- Links and hyperlinks
- Application of various functions such as scroll bar and back and forward buttons
- Information download

5.4.3.3 Partnership with faculty

Whilst advocating partnerships for the librarian and faculty for curriculum enrichment in distance education, Heller-Ross (1996) wrote, "curriculum enrichment is the process whereby librarians assist faculty to broaden their resources beyond the standard textbook". She supposed that librarians are capable of providing research assistance to faculty as they develop their courses and create reading reserve lists. She enumerated the following strategies employed in Plattsburgh, her college: (1) meeting regularly with faculty to discuss the courses and library involvement; (2) reading copies of course syllabi and offering ideas; (3) attending classes to get a real sense of the courses; and (4) consulting regularly with faculty for input on library acquisitions.

The above issues are some of the reasons why the library should enter into good relationships and partnerships with faculty in general and DEU in particular in the University of Botswana. If this is achieved, the librarians would be able to adequately perform their liaison responsibilities with the faculty. The question of DEU not furnishing the library with adequate information on their thinking and planning would no

longer be relevant. With these relationships in place, both the DEU and the Library would be so much closer to one another.

5.4.3.4 Library service for disabled distance learners

Because of the nature of their mode of study and the remoteness of where many of them live or work, distance learners have generally been regarded as the most difficult customers of the library to cater for properly. A problem situation is when a distance learner has a disability, and this presents an even greater challenge. Figure 5 records information about some of the distance learners of UB who stated that they had a disability, and, as a result, they found it difficult to visit a library. The problems of these students are far greater than those of "normal" distance learners. The library needs to bear in mind that the disability of some students should not prevent them from accessing the library and information services that are to be provided for distance learners. The library needs to take special note of handicapped learners, where they live or work and the nature of their disability, and to give them special consideration or provide specialised services for them in the course of delivering services to distance learners.

5.4.3.5 Special arrangements for use of other libraries

The UBL may be misled to think that it can adequately satisfy the needs of their remote distance learners, whilst its three branch libraries are concentrated in only two cities in the country. The literature shows the need for libraries involved in distance learning to engage in collaboration or partnership with other libraries in the country in order to effectively provide library services to the remote learners. The researcher's consultations with the DEU suggested that it would be beneficial if the librarians of the four Colleges of Education, where distance learners go for their residential programmes, were directed to help distance students. However, the librarians disclosed that there were, as yet, no formal arrangements with any other library to help distance students. This is unfortunate

and collaboration with other librarians and libraries should be sought at the library-to-library level and not the DEU-to-non-UBL level.

It is noted with interest that, apart from the Botswana National Library Service that has branch libraries in various parts of the country, the six Colleges of Education in the country, four of which run similar conventional DPE programmes as the DEU, have the potential to be of tremendous assistance. This can only happen if the UBL goes into collaborative partnerships with them. In addition, there are several Education Centres as well as Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) in the country that have libraries. These could also be of assistance to the University of Botswana library in its mission to provide an "uninhibited library and information support service" to its numerous distance learners scattered all over the country.

5.4.3.6   Access to subject librarian

The investigation described in this study revealed that a substantial number of students did not know how to get access to their subject librarian. Only 87 respondents (31.6 percent) claimed that they knew (Figure 15). A total of 188 respondents (68.4 percent) did not know how to get access to their course or subject librarian. It is not problematic for the conventional student to get to know and seek assistance from his course or subject librarian, and it should not pose any problem for distance learners to at least know who their subject librarians are and how to get in touch with them. One way of achieving this is for the library to designate librarians to specific groups. Once such an arrangement is made internally the designated librarians could formally write to their students to introduce themselves. They should be informed that they should feel free to get in touch whenever they needed assistance on library and information support services for their courses. The contact details including name, address, telephone number, email address and fax number of the designated librarian should be made known to the students. In addition, the librarians' invitation to the students to contact them could be included with the course materials to cut costs.

5.4.3.7   Other services

5.4.3.7.1   Toll-free telephone line

Many open and distance learning institutions the world over, particularly those in the advanced countries, operate toll-free telephone lines, otherwise known as the 0800 or 800 or 1 800 phone line. One of the advantages of the telephone in distance learning, as has already been mentioned, is to bridge the gap between the library and the students. The toll-free lines are usually put in place for the advantage of their distance learners who are then able to make telephone enquiries and requests. In Botswana, a number of establishments have already adopted this system. The University of Botswana Library may also want to give consideration to the installation of a 0800 line to enhance the provision of library and information support services for its remote students.

5.4.3.7.2   Postal service

We discussed in the course of the literature review operations involving direct postal services to distance learners in some institutions. Some of these institutions pay the entire cost of postage of materials to and from their distance learners, through what is generally referred to as a prepaid postal service. Other institutions only pay for materials posted one way to the students, whilst the return cost is borne by the students themselves. The University of Botswana Library may want to consider the option that is most suitable, and one that can be accommodated by the institution involved. Using registered post for such materials to or from students would ensure their security and prompt delivery to destinations.

5.4.3.7.3   Opening of e-mail accounts for distance learners

One way of helping the distance learners develop a sense of belonging to the university, and to encourage them to use the library facilities, is to open an e-mail account for each

of them, as is done for the conventional students. It is, however, important to point out that it is not enough to open e-mail accounts for them. They also need to be adequately taught and trained to utilise such facilities. If an e-mail account is opened for each of the distance learners, and direction given to them on how to use it, they would gain easy and direct access to their subject and course librarians and be able to ask for assistance.

In addition to the fact that students would be able to interact with their subject librarians, it would also be possible for them to interact with one another, either on a one-to-one basis or one-to-many. In this way they would be able to share views and work jointly or in groups through using the e-mail facility. One other great advantage of the e-mail facility is the availability of bulletin boards and listservers that could be created for the users. Bulletin boards are like notice boards on which information is placed. Listserver is a forum where a group of people can use e-mail to share information with one another. For the target group of people on the listserver, information and news may be sent through the bulletin boards, and discussions can be held whereby everyone on the listserver is free to make contributions on topical issues. Lehnert (1999) stated that "these lists typically operate as a broadcast medium: one person talks to the list, and everyone else listens". Thus it is possible for students to use listservers or bulletin boards for each of the modules. Indeed, this system has generally been noted as one of the most cost-effective resources available on-line. Where this is created for distance learners, it would be easy for them not only to contact each other, but also the library, and their tutors.

5.4.3.7.4 Keeping records

The librarians observed that they would not want to see any difference between the distance learners and the traditional students. For this reason they had not been keeping separate statistics of these students' transactions with the library. However, they made it clear that a change was contemplated whereby separate statistics would be compiled in future. They must be encouraged to keep separate records and statistics for these two groups of students. This would provide them with data that would assist them in making appropriate plans for distance learners currently and in the future. Indeed, the keeping of

statistics should not only be limited to the students' transactions in the UB Library and its branch libraries. Adequate monitoring procedures should be put in place in other establishments with whom the UB library has formed partnerships, such as the College of Education libraries, BNLS branch libraries and any others.

5.4.3.7.5 Website for UB distance learners

In addition to the University of Botswana Library Website, extra pages could be constructed for the use of distance learners. On these web pages the rights of, and services available to, this category of learner could be spelt out in some detail. It should also provide links with other very useful websites, both those of the university and relevant websites elsewhere. In advocating web support for distance learners, it should also be possible to include in the website links to all the prescribed materials that are available on-line. If these links were provided, students would have easy access to and would be able to download prescribed articles that could be scanned or made available in the system. It should also be possible for students to make on-line requests for the prescribed books and additional reading materials suggested by their tutors. Forms should be designed for this and made available on the web page. These are some of the benefits that distance learners stand to gain if a web page is specially designed for them.

5.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This dissertation could form the basis for further research into the utilisation and the role of the library in distance education in Botswana. This study has been limited to the library and information support services provided by the University of Botswana Library for its distance learners.

The distance programmes currently being run by the University are at the certificate or diploma level. The holders of the Junior Secondary School Certificate or the Grade Two Teachers Certificate are the target audiences. Plans are being made to introduce other programmes by the distance-learning mode at degree and postgraduate levels. The

students for the new programmes are expected to have higher educational backgrounds, and they will probably have different attitudes to using library facilities. It would be interesting and profitable to conduct research similar to the present study when more programmes at higher levels have been introduced. Since the University library would also have gained more experience in the handling of support services for distance learners, such studies should provide further valuable insights into library involvement in distance education programmes of this University. Research incorporating follow-up measurement and evaluation would be desirable to determine the extent of the support services being provided over a period to distance learners in the dual mode environment of the University of Botswana.

This dissertation is a case study, and specifically focuses on the involvement of the University of Botswana Library in the distance education programmes of the University. It is, however, noted that many citizens of Botswana, and a large number of people of other nationalities resident in Botswana, are enrolled on a distance education programme. They are studying at various levels with open and distance-learning universities outside Botswana, and are much further away from their institutions than are those who pursue their studies within the country with the University of Botswana. An evaluation of the role and involvement of libraries in the operation of the distance-learning programmes outside Botswana is lacking at present. Such a study would be an interesting and beneficial one to undertake.