Information behaviour and information practices of academic librarians:
a scoping review to guide studies on their learning in practice

Marguerite Nel

Problem statement

Research questions

1. What is the scope of studies investigating the information behaviour and information practices of academic librarians?

2. What is reported on the information behaviour and information practices of academic librarians?

3. How do academic librarians acquire knowledge, skills and expertise to align their information services to new developments and demands of the research environment?
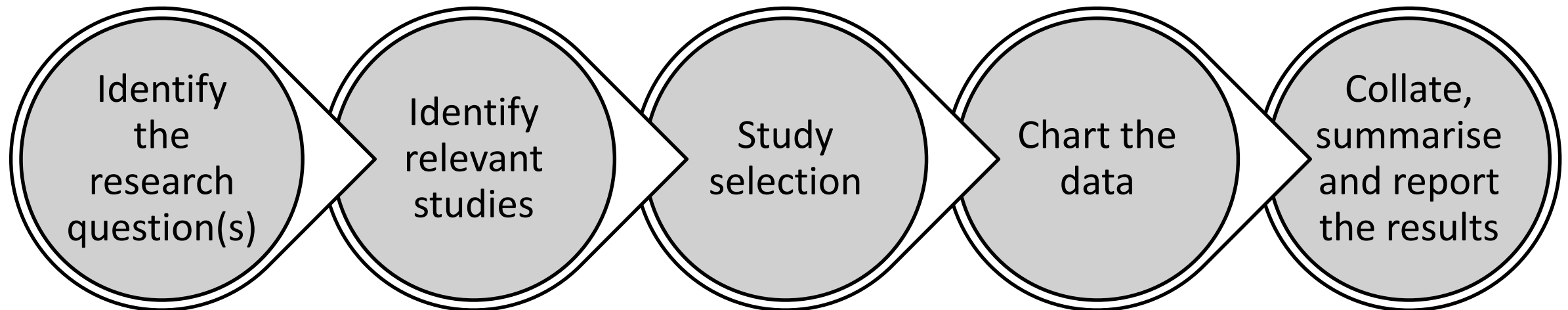
UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Methodology

Scoping review

'a form of knowledge synthesis that addresses an exploratory research question aimed at mapping key concepts, types of evidence, and gaps in research related to a defined area or field by systematically searching, selecting, and synthesizing existing knowledge' (Colquhoun *et al.*, 2014:1294)

- Lorenzetti and Powelson (2015):
  - practices and trends in library mentoring programmes
- Heyns *et al.* (2019):
  - generational expectations of academic library leaders
- O'Brien *et al.* (2017):
  - individual differences in information seeking behaviour and information retrieval of people interacting with information and information systems

Scoping review (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005 and PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews: Checklist and Explanation (Tricco *et al*., 2018))

Identify the research question(s) → Identify relevant studies → Study selection → Chart the data → Collate, summarise and report the results

Literature search strategy

Search string (final version)

- [(information behaviour) OR (information behavior) OR (information use) OR (information searching) OR (information seeking) OR (information need*) OR (information encountering) OR (information avoidance) OR (information sharing) OR (knowledge transfer) OR communication OR (information activities) OR (information practice*)] AND [academic OR research OR university OR universities OR (higher education)] AND [librarian* OR (information specialist*) OR (information professional*)]
- The search was applied to the title, keyword and abstract fields

Literature search strategy

Inclusion criteria

- Publication years 2000-2019
- Peer-reviewed publications
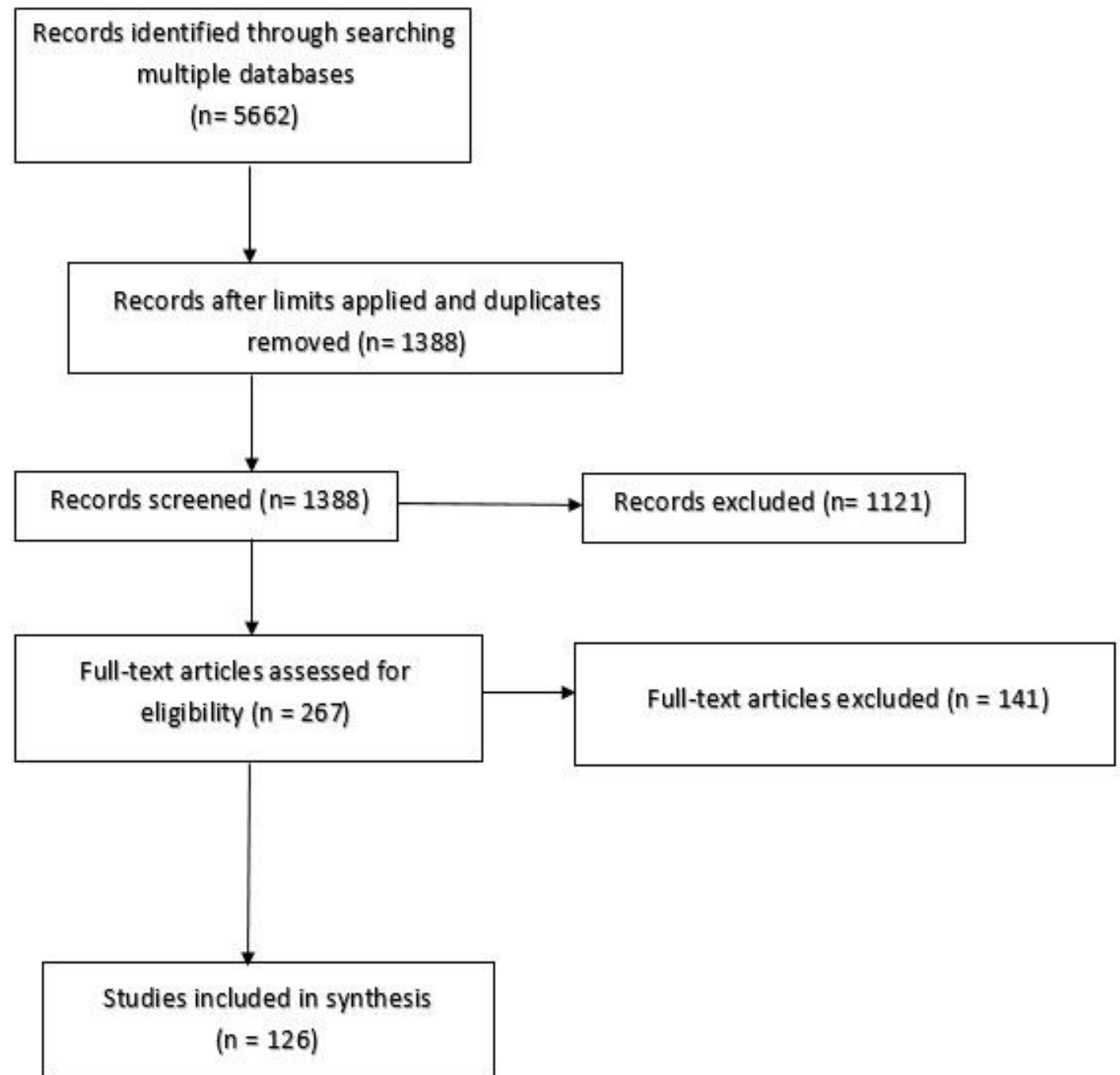- Full text
- English language

Exclusion criteria

- Grey literature, editorials, commentaries, letters, conference announcements or proceedings
- Book reviews
- Evidence-based library and information practice (EBLIP)
- Studies focussing on library products or services, reports on library projects or best practices as it relate to service delivery
- Studies focussing on other types of libraries (e.g., school or public libraries)
- Studies focussing on library users (not librarians)
- Library and information science (LIS) schools or curricula
- Other

Databases

- EBSCOhost
  - Includes: Academic Search Complete, ERIC (Education Resource Information Center), Family & Society Studies Worldwide, Humanities Source, Library & Information Science Source, Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts (LISTA), Emerald Insight
- ProQuest
  - Includes: Humanities Index, SciTech Premium Collection, Social Science Premium Collection (which includes Education Collection, Library & Information Science Collection, Linguistics Collection, Politics Collection, Social Science Database, Sociology Collection)
- ScienceDirect
- Scopus
- Web of Science Core Collection

Study selection

Records identified through searching multiple databases (n= 5662)

Records after limits applied and duplicates removed (n= 1388)

Records screened (n= 1388)

Records excluded (n= 1121)

Full-text articles assessed for eligibility (n = 267)

Full-text articles excluded (n = 141)

Studies included in synthesis (n = 126)

Data extraction and mapping
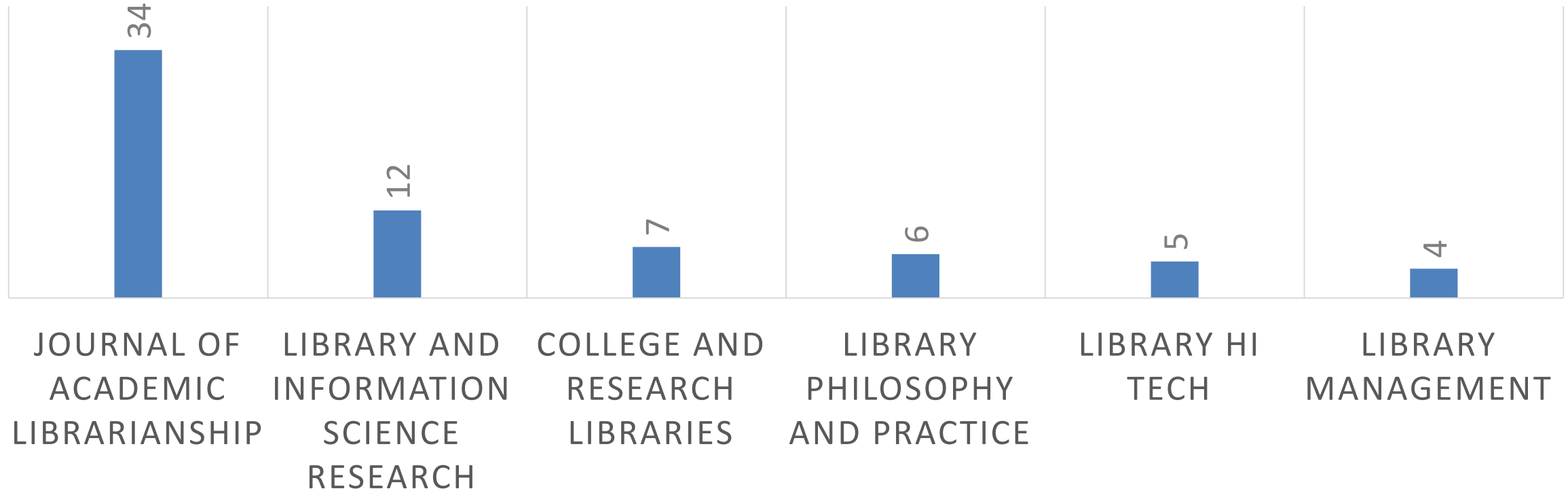
Excel spreadsheet

- Journal title
- Publication year
- Country of origin of the first author
- Research approach
- Data collection method
- Main information activity (e.g., information seeking, information practice, information sharing, information usage and information needs)
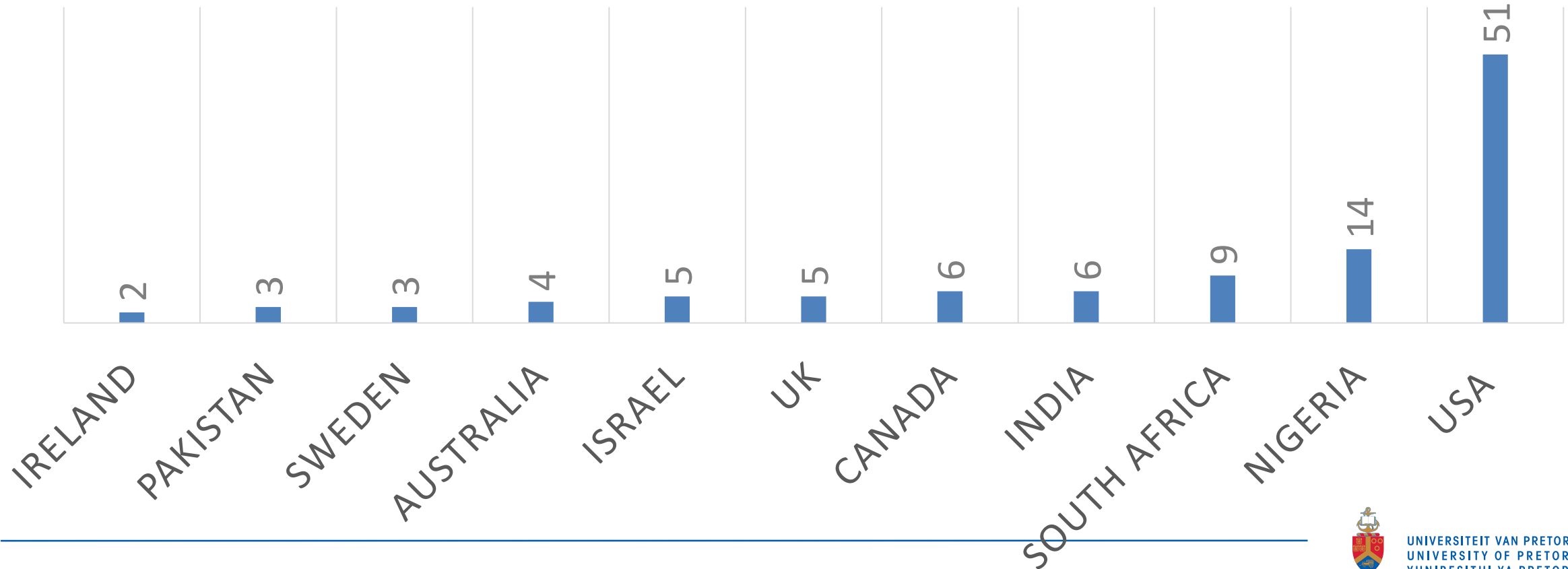
Results

Scope and labelling of studies: Journals published in

■ Number of articles (N=126)

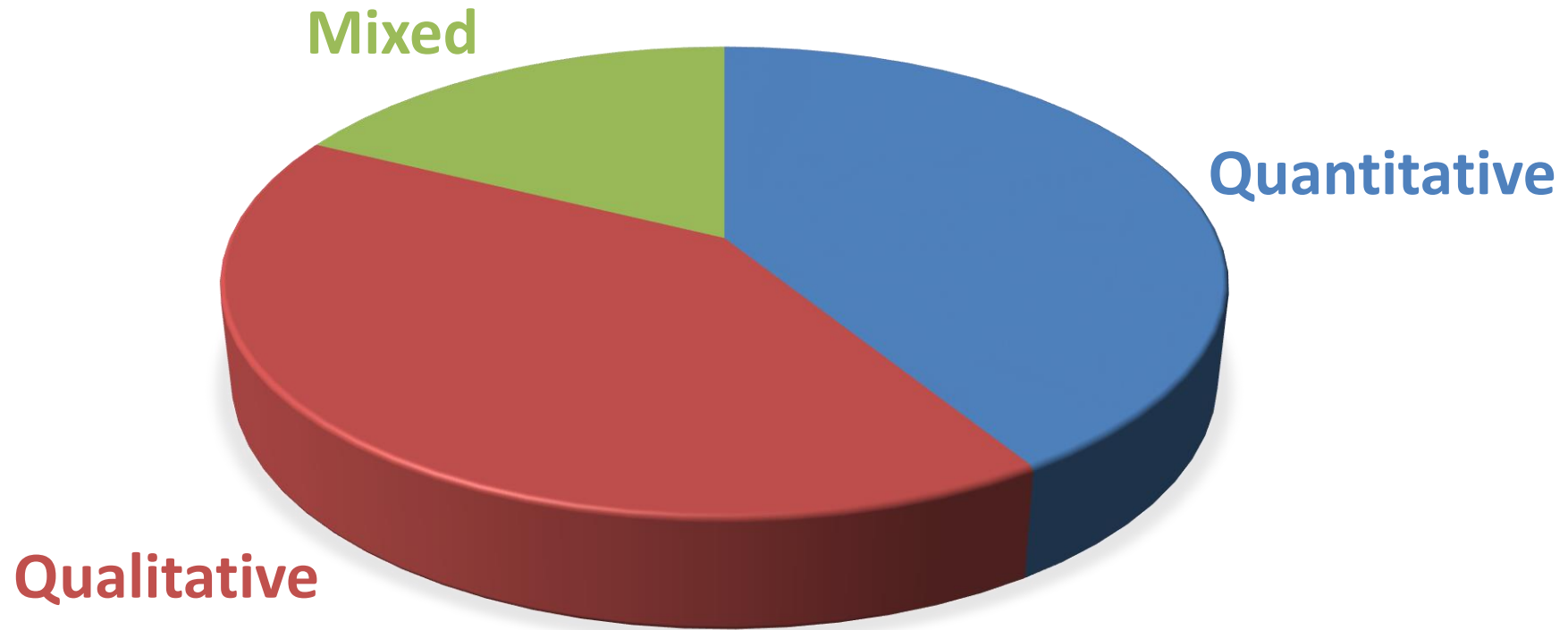|					
34	12	7	6	5	4
JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIANSHIP	LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE RESEARCH	COLLEGE AND RESEARCH LIBRARIES	LIBRARY PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE	LIBRARY HI TECH	LIBRARY MANAGEMENT

Scope and labelling of studies: Country of origin of main author

NUMBER OF PUBLICATIONS (N=126)

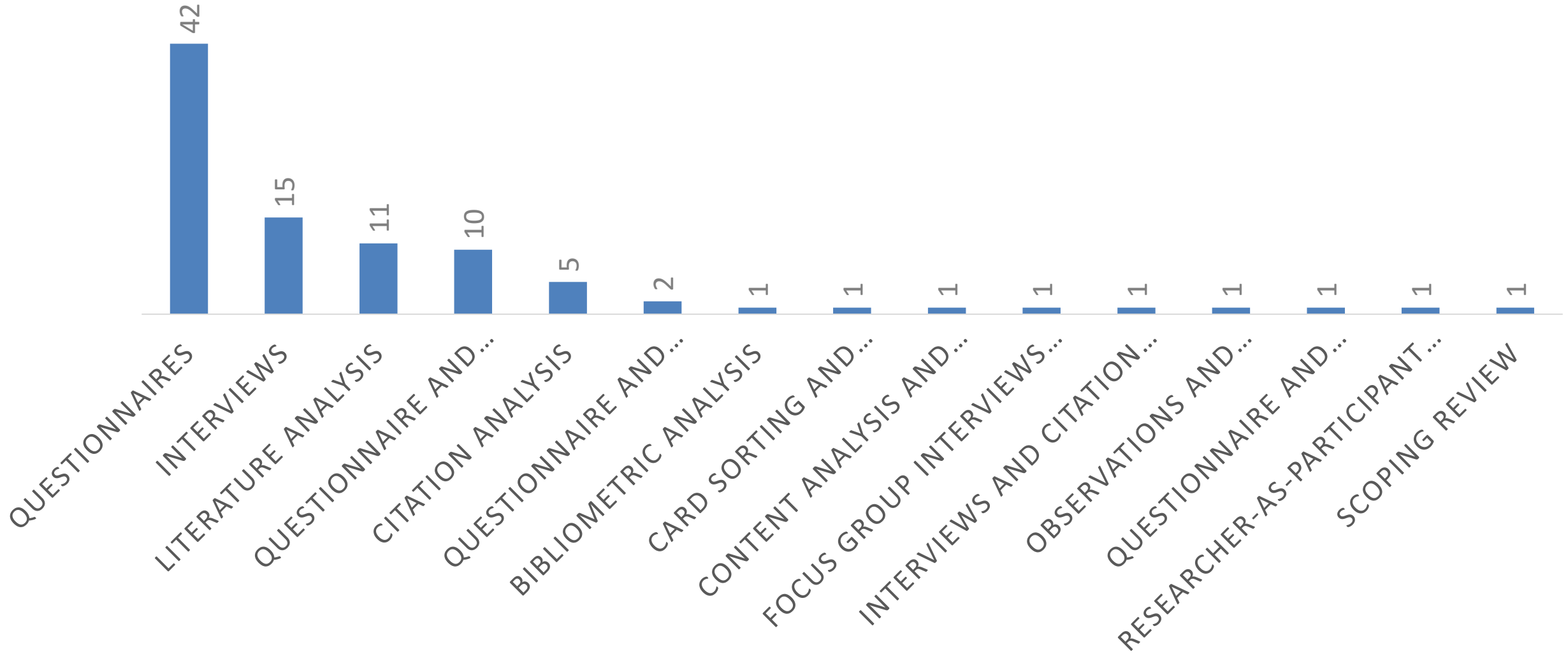| Country	Publications
IRELAND	2
PAKISTAN	3
SWEDEN	3
AUSTRALIA	4
ISRAEL	5
UK	5
CANADA	6
INDIA	6
SOUTH AFRICA	9
NIGERIA	14
USA	51

Scope and labelling of studies: Research methodology used

Scope and labelling of studies:
Data collection methods used

Information behaviour and information practices of academic librarians

Theoretical roots

Transformational learning theory

Communities of practice (Lave and Wenger)

Social constructionism

Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy

Legitimate peripheral participation

Social positioning theory

Symbolic interactionism

Social interaction as rituals of deference and demeanor (Goffman)

Knotworking theory (cultural–historical activity theory)

Organisational socialisation theory

Theory of work values

Practice theory

Diffusion of innovations theory

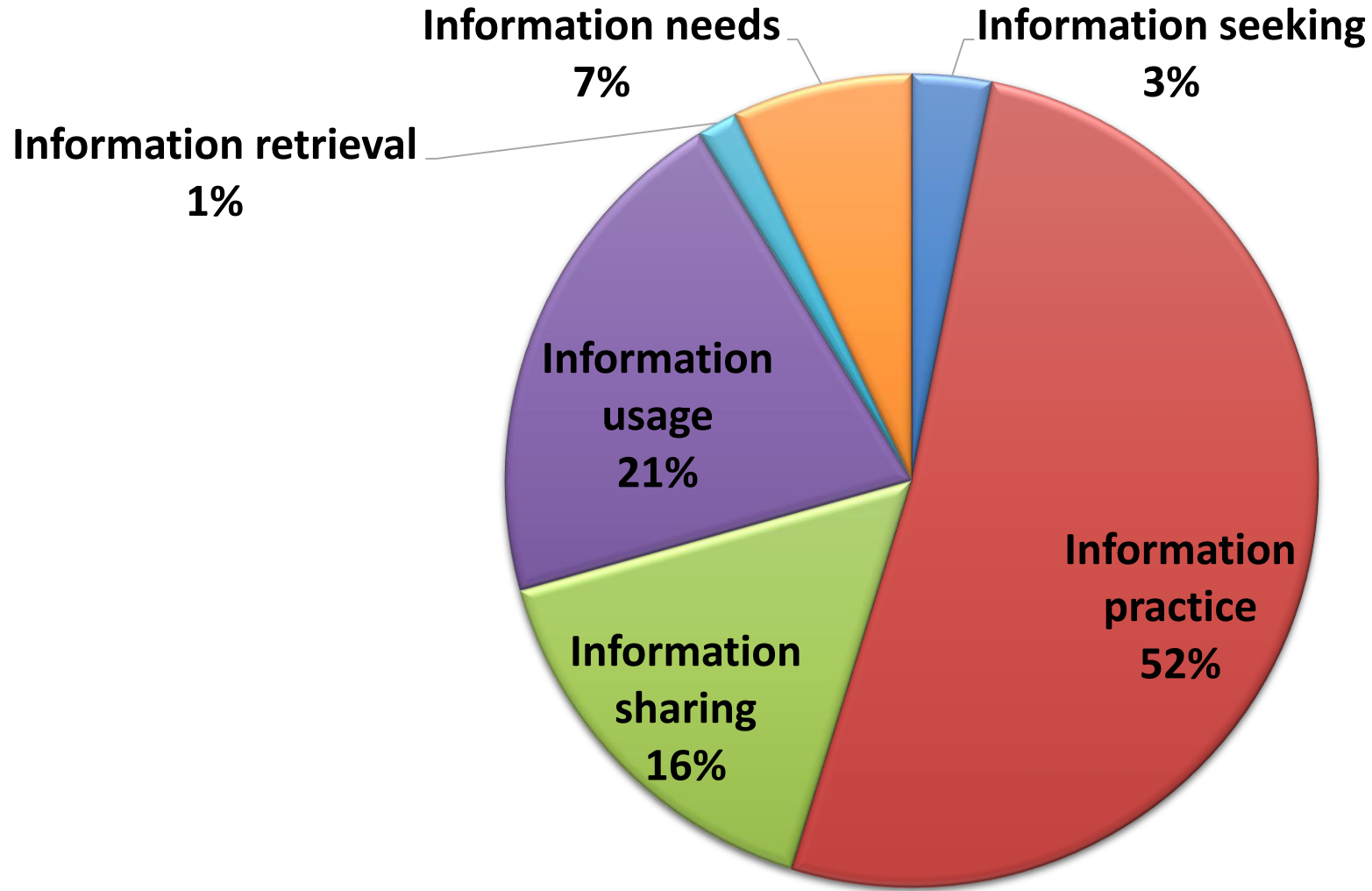Organisational lag model

Information overload

Critical information literacy approach

Zones of intervention (Kuhlthau)

Zones of proximal development (Vygotsky)

Focus on information activities

Information needs
7%

Information seeking
3%

Information retrieval
1%

Information usage
21%

Information practice
52%

Information sharing
16%

Information needs

- Need information to enhance their technology skills
- Need information to be able to teach
- Need information to improve general work related abilities
- Information needs of health librarians are different from the information needs of other subject librarians

Information seeking behaviour

- Differ from the information seeking behaviour of users
  - Start searches in library catalogues
- Confidence

Information sharing

- Participate in Communities of Practice
- Electronic mail
- Listservs
- Face-to face meetings
- Social media
- SMS
- Personal, online discussion groups
- Professional writing groups

Information resources usage

- Library databases and collections
- Electronic books
- Scholarly journals
- Google

Information practices

- Collaborate and socialise
- Information practices are shaped by norms and attitudes
- Information literacy practices
- Research and publication practices

Information activities linked to knowledge and skills development

Membership to non-library professional organisations — 1
Networking with other libraries — 1
Journal clubs — 2
Meetings — 2
Study visits — 2
Communities of practice — 3
Courses — 3
Collaboration with faculty — 3
Colleagues — 3
Conferences — 3
Reading — 4
Workshops — 5
Formal continuing professional development… — 7
Mentoring — 8

Discussion

Information behaviour and information practices of academic librarians

- Importance of context and work roles
  - Determine information seeking
  - Determine choice of information sources
- Community of justification
  - Ethical practices
  - Research practices
- Symbolic interactionism
  - Roles and identities are constructed through social interaction

Information behaviour and information practices of academic librarians

- Librarians prefer less formal information resources
- Librarians are willing to learn and understand the importance of skills development
  - Mentoring
  - Communities of practice
- Collaboration and socialisation

Further research

- Focus on different tasks, roles and functional groups
- Information communication technology and innovation
- Training

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Conclusion

Thank You

marguerite.nel@up.ac.za