LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES IN SUPPORT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION:
THE CASE OF ZIMBABWE OPEN UNIVERSITY, MASHONALAND CENTRAL
REGIONAL LIBRARY

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I dedicate this project to all my beloved family members who endured it all, especially my children: Gamuchirai, Obedience and Ngaavongwe.
ABSTRACT

Distance education at tertiary level in Zimbabwe has been widely accepted and adopted by many people. More often, distance education students face difficulties in getting required information to complete assignments and prepare for examinations. The study sought to examine the library and information services in support of distance education at Mashonaland Central Regional Library in Bindura.

The research methods were mixed-research designs in which both qualitative and quantitative techniques were employed. These included review of related literature, interviews and questionnaires. The findings were that the lack of computers and internet services were the major constraints that hindered the students from using the library. This had been indicated by 91% of the respondents. Recommendations were that the regional library should increase the provision of library and information services to its distance education students.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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<tr>
<td>ACRL</td>
<td>Association of Colleges and Research Libraries</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOU</td>
<td>British Open University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD-ROM</td>
<td>Compact-Disc Read Only Memory</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSU</td>
<td>Charles Sturt University</td>
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<td>ICTs</td>
<td>Information Communication Technologies</td>
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<td>OPAC</td>
<td>Online Public Access Catalogue</td>
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<td>OUT</td>
<td>Open University of Tanzania</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisations</td>
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<td>UNISA</td>
<td>University of South Africa</td>
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<td>ZOU</td>
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Distance education at tertiary level in Zimbabwe has been widely accepted and adopted by many people whose life constraints could not allow them to undertake conventional learning. It has fast become indispensible as more and more students are taking part in the new dispensation of academic learning. Statistics from the Vice Chancellor’s 2011 speech showed that since its inception in 1999, Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) has graduated over 21 000 students through open and distance learning and statistics from ten open universities of the world including University of South Africa (UNISA) had graduated 3, 417, 000 students through distance learning mode. (Oladokun 2002) Knowing that library and information services to distance education is critically important; ZOU has established regional libraries to serve students’ information needs near their natural settings.

Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) is the mega state university offering distance learning mode in Zimbabwe. UNESCO (2002) posit that distance education started when the Centre for Distance Education was established by the University of Zimbabwe in 1993 and in 1996 became the University College for Distance Education, which later in 1999 through an Act of Parliament (Chapter 25:20) paved the way for Zimbabwe Open University. Kangai et al (2010) reiterate that the university was established to cater for a substantial component of people who, by design or unintentionally, could not be accommodated in conventional universities by offering them an opportunity to study in their homes and in their workplaces through distance education. ZOU is a multidisciplinary and inter-faculty institution, which delivers services from the national centre to
ten regional campuses throughout Zimbabwe. Each regional centre has a library, to provide information services and equip each student with life-long learning skills.

Keegan (1994) undertook a study of distance learning in 12 member states of the European Union in 1994 and noted that 2.25 million students were enrolled in distance learning institutions. Watson (1997) observed that, the rapid growth of distance education is occasioned by the phenomenal growth of the world’s population and the desire for education at all levels. Cassner and Adams (1998) buttress that library and information services are an essential component of this educational experience, and as such, the services should be offered to all distance education students regardless of where they are located.

In support, the guidelines written by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) (2011) serve as a framework for providing library and information services to distance education students. The guidelines state that each student is entitled to library resources and services of the respective institution regardless of method of course delivery or location of the student.

Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) is the only university offering distance education in a single-mode of delivery in Zimbabwe. In support of this democratization of university education, the institution provides learning materials in a modular system of delivery and facilitates the development of quality modules through training of experts in module writing and editing skills.

In support of Oladokun (2002) that library and information services should be put in place when an institution introduces an education system through a distance delivery mode, the university established regional libraries to cater for its wide spectrum of students in their natural settings. Kanjilil (1997) assert that the design of self-instructional modules that students receive is deeply
supported by the services of a well equipped and efficient library which is conveniently accessible for the success of the academic progress of the students.

Watson (1997) reiterate that the provision of adequate and quality library services in single-mode institutions encounters constraints of a different nature as there is a perception that distance learners do not need library and information services. She opines that tutors and educators may assume that they can package all the information needs for such students, an approach which she says will encourage rote learning and retards the development of critical life-serving information seeking and gathering skills. Supply of adequate library and information services is critical for the success of these students in completing their assignments and examinations.

In view of this, Sithole (2011) opines that university libraries are the dynamic engines for academic business and distance education students are eligible for library and information services that equal those of campus based students. This has also been evident from the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Distance Learning Section Guidelines Committee (2004) which specifies that access to adequate library services and resources is essential for the attainment of superior academic skills in post secondary education, regardless of where students are located. However, Sithole (2011) states that the rapid growth of distance education is not supported by vibrant library and information services, as there is little or no recognition of the central role that libraries play in support of the quality of education or in the development of lifelong learning. Watson (1997) also notes that access to library and information services provide opportunities for a broadening of intellectual stimulation.

The peculiar nature of distance learning environment as observed by Oladokun (2002) requires that library and information services be provided to students irrespective of where the students
are located and the services should include the production and distribution of leaflets describing library services, dealing with telephone enquiries, responding to fax queries, granting longer loan periods or renewal (where affordable), undertaking literature searches requested, photocopying and sending articles by post. However, the researcher observes that the Mashonaland Central regional library practices the traditional methods of dispensing library and information services whereby, students physically go to the library to satisfy their information needs. The traditional methods according to Watson (1997) were based on the premise that the information seeker will go to the library or will initiate the steps to seek out sources of information. Oladokun (2002) reiterates that traditional methods of dispensing library and information services may not be very relevant for distance learning students as the current dispensation requires students not to physically get into the library or resource centre to make use of library services.

The Mashonaland Central regional library provided library and information resources and services to 421 registered students from a catchment area of eight districts which are Bindura, Centenary, Guruve, Mazowe, Mbire, Mt Darwin, Rushinga and Shamva, who were in various programmes offered by the university which include diplomas, bachelor’s degrees, master degrees and doctorates. Oladokun (2002) opines that for a library and information services of today to function effectively in distance learning environment, changes need to be made to past practices and migrate from conventional status to distance librarianship, whereby students are served regardless of their geographical locations. He notes that distance learning has no known geographical barriers as its students can be found anywhere and everywhere- be it urban or rural areas. Singh (1997) identifies distance learning environment as an educational approach which helps to bring education to the doorsteps of a large and varied clientele who can not benefit from the conventional system of education. In this view, Oladokun (2002) further advances the fact
that a library in any institution of learning is known to complement and enhance the quality of educational programmes, and emphasises that the docile and immobile library and information services waiting for their inquisitive students to make their demands no longer hold water for the distance education milieu.

In order to buttress this study, the researcher adopted a deductive mode of inquiry based on the Association of Colleges and Research Libraries; for distance learning library services ACRL (2011) guidelines which entail that library resources and services in institutions of higher learning must meet the needs of all students wherever they maybe. These guidelines serve as a framework for providing library support to distance learners, and they emphasise that academic libraries must provide or secure convenient and direct access to library materials in appropriate formats that are of sufficient quality, depth, number, scope and currency to:

i. meet all students’ needs in fulfilling course assignments and examination preparations;

ii. enrich the academic programmes;

iii. meet teaching and research needs;

iv. support curricular needs;

v. facilitate the acquisition of lifelong learning skills;

vi. accommodate students with varying levels of technological access; and,

vii. accommodate other informational needs of the distance learning community as appropriate.
According to Haynes (2002), the guidelines ask institutions to take responsibility for providing library services for distance students and encourage institutions to mail books from their libraries to students living away from the campus. ACRL (2004), assert that the guidelines have been necessitated by the view that library reference services, document delivery services and many texts and databases are made available remotely through technology, therefore libraries should:

i. ensure the provision of equitable library services to both new and existing distance learning programmes;

ii. ensure that services of high academic quality are provided to both new and existing distance learning programmes; and,

iii. assure accrediting agencies that standards of high academic quality are being maintained in library services to distance learning programmes.

An ideal situation in the provision of library services according to Cavanagh and Tucker (1997) is that libraries should be well equipped and provide information resources and services to distance learners’ in-terms of adequate textbooks, academic journals and other electronic resources to help remote students with access to research materials. Watson (1997) has the view that in ideal situations, equitable and quality library and information services must be made available to distance learners irrespective of their location and access to library resources must be through instructional programmes on the use of library resources, delivery of information literacy skills, books, bibliographic instructions, borrowing privileges, document delivery and other reference skills to equip students with research capabilities. She further alludes that these
resources should be sufficient to fulfill assignments, support curricular and research needs and facilitate the acquisition of life-long learning.

In support of the importance of libraries, Cavanagh (1994) posits that the library has a definite role to play in distance learning as there is a need for some substantial research to help students in the selection of suitable research materials for fulfilling academic requirements and using the library competently. Maisiri (2006) also has the view that information needs of a user community represent the focal point from which an academic library ought to base its services. Guerrero (2011) also postulates that a critical component of distance learning is the services provided by university libraries and their capacity to meet the information needs of distance learning students.

The researcher, through his experience as an academic staff in distance education at ZOU noticed the high failure rate on examinations by some students who study through distance learning and also that a large percentage of course assignments usually lacked evidence of research as referenced materials are those authors already referenced in the modules they are given as study packages. What boggled the mind of the researcher was whether the high failure rate could be attributed to the lack of library use or whether it implied that some distance education students used only materials provided to them as study packages? Wooliscroft (1997) stresses that library services enable students to obtain best value from their distance learning programmes and emphasizes on wide reading beyond the course text as an essential component of the learning process. Nduka (2011) has the view that a distance learner without quality library support would have little or no experience in conducting research. It is against this background
that prompted the researcher to examine library services offered by the Mashonaland Central regional library.

1.2 Statement of the Problem
The number of students enrolling for distance education was increasing, but the quality of library services and resources are not growing at a proportional rate (Sithole 2011). Considering the provision of library and information services to distance education students at the Zimbabwe Open University Library, Bindura, it seemed that these services were poorly developed as often students faced difficulties in getting the required information to complete research in assignments and examination preparations; and there was no library infrastructure. The research examined the library and information services provided to distance learners at the ZOU’s Mashonaland Central regional library.

1.3 Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this study was to find out whether library and information services provided at the regional library, Bindura, were meeting distance learning students’ needs in fulfilling course assignments and examination preparations.

1.3.1 Aim of the Study
The aim of the study was to examine the provision of library and information services at the ZOU regional library, Bindura with a view to determine how effectively the library could enhance the delivery of library services to distance learning students.

1.3.2 Objectives of the study
The following objectives were grounded in the ACRL’s underlying philosophy of meeting distance education students’ information needs.
1. To find out the nature of library resources provided at the regional library;

2. To examine the mode of provision of library and information services to distance learning students;

3. To establish constraints to the use of the library by distance learners;

4. To determine the extent to which high academic quality was being addressed at the regional library;

5. To establish whether library services were accommodating students with varying levels of technological skills.

1.4 Research Questions

Questions that provoked this study include:

1. Were library services meeting distance students’ needs in fulfilling course assignments and examination preparations?

2. What were the constraints to the use of library by distance learning students?

3. To what extent was high academic quality service being addressed at the regional library?

4. Were library services accommodating students with varying levels of technological skills?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study was expected to contribute to the understanding of the regional library’s current practice in serving students who were enrolled with the university. It sought to increase the
knowledge base which could be used by the Mashonaland Central Regional Library to bridge the gap so that library and information services are used to their fullest extent by distance learning students. The study was also being conducted in the pretext that it would generate new knowledge of dealing with distance learning students in a Zimbabwean context.

1.6 Assumption of the Study
The study had the following assumptions:

i. There was a wide perception that distance learners do not need library services.

ii. Zimbabwe Open University was responsible for ensuring that open and distance learners had equitable access to library resources and services that meet the ACRL guidelines.

1.7 Scope of the Study
The scope of the study was looked at in the context of social, political, contextual and physical parameters in which library and information services were provided to distance education students.

1.8 Limitations of the Study
The researcher was based in Harare and had to frequently travel to Bindura for data gathering. Time allocated for the study was also a limiting factor. Another limitation was that students were reluctant to answer the questionnaire since they were committed to class tutorials. However, the researcher compensated and covered up for such weaknesses by using both primary and secondary sources of information.
1.9 Definition of Terms

Information needs
Kakai et al (2004) define information needs as an individual’s way and manner of gathering and sourcing information for personal use, knowledge updating and development. Majid and Kassim (2000) also assert that information needs is a broad term, which involves a set of actions that an individual takes to express and seek information, evaluate and select information, and finally uses that information to satisfy his/her information needs.

Library and information services
In the context of this study, library and information services include the delivery of information literacy, books, bibliographic instructions and other reference skills to equip students with research capabilities.

Distance learning
This is a method of study that is pursued by students who are physically separated from their tutors and institution for the greater part of their study (Watson, 1992).

Distance learners
Watson (1997) defines distance learners as those who opt, or are forced by circumstances, to learn by distance. Such persons are mature, urban or rural dwellers who are forced by circumstances to pursue learning needs via distance.

Remote Students
These are students who live in rural areas and are physically cut by distance from urban centres. In the context of this study the term is used synonymous with the term remote.

Zimbabwe Open University
An institution responsible for offering open and distance learning mode of study in Zimbabwe.

1.10 Summary

The chapter provided background of the study, information on the statement of the problem and objectives of the study. The chapter also provided background information about the theoretical framework that evolves in distance environment. The next chapter is going to focus on literature review.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The review of related literature was important as it enabled the researcher to know what other researchers have already gathered about the problem being researched upon. It prevented the researcher from duplicating work that has been already done, but identifies gaps within what had been covered. Dooley (2003:284) notes that literature review helps to identify relationships between ideas and practices by relating ideas and theory to applications. He stresses that finding all related literature is impossible or impractical as reviewers often limit their analysis because of time. According to Dahl (2002), literature review conceptually synthesises results of the past studies and enables the researcher to gain from the experiences of other researchers, and what has been failed before as well as new trends in the field.

Williamson (2002:46) defines literature review as identifying, locating, synthesising and analyzing the conceptual literature as well as completed research, reports, articles, conference papers, books, theses and other materials about the specific problem of a research topic. She opines that literature review builds a logical framework for the study and is important in the generation of theory and in the formulation and refinement of research questions and hypotheses. Literature review helped in the choice of a research method for the study and enabled the researcher to ascertain that the chosen method was well accepted by other researchers. Criswell (1994:23) agrees that literature review places the research study in its context and enables the researcher to understand the phenomenon of the study, and as well to avoid mistakes done by
previous researchers. Busha and Harter (1980:56) also agree that literature review identifies the main methodologies and research techniques that have been used in the field, and their advantages and disadvantages.

2.2 The Concept of Distance Learning Programme

Oladeji (2000) define distance learning as an educational programme designed for those who could not, may be for family, financial or some other reasons attend existing educational institutions to acquire learning without necessarily becoming regular students of such institutions. According to Fulcher and Lock (1999) distance education is basically about access to educational opportunities for learners who do not wish or are not able to attend programmes offered on-site. Nduka (2012) opines that one of the main goals of distance education programmes is to make sure that the knowledge and skills acquired affect the behaviour of the students. Carty (1991), Crocker (1982) and Holmberg (1986) all describe distance education as off-campus learning, external studies, individualised learning, home study, open learning and independent study.

Oladokun (2002) notes that an increasing number of people, particularly working adults are desirous of further education, and to satisfy this, distance education is increasingly becoming more popular. However, he points out that the necessary ingredient of distance learning are the library and information services, which should provide the facilities required by their distinctive students. Holmberg (1985) states that distance learning was created to give chance to study to those who, for financial, social, geographical or medical reasons could not go to conventional universities. He describes distance learning as various forms of study at all levels which are not under the continuous, immediate supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture
rooms and on the same premises, but which nevertheless, benefit from the planning, guidance and tuition of tutorial organisation. Oladokun (2002) also advances the fact that distance learning has been adopted as a mode of delivery alternative to the conventional system, but reiterates that one snag that has been of concern is the provision of library and information services.

Boadi and Letsolo (2004) assert that distance learning provides opportunities to working people to have access to education so that they would not have to leave their jobs in order to attend classes. In addition, Igwe (1995) agrees that distance learning is gradually gaining ground in Africa, and reiterates that though still saddled with teething problems, workers, politicians, school leavers and the general public are trooping into distance learning institutions to acquire education. Omogbhe (2011) also view distance learning as the formalised learning received while the student is on a location outside the university campus, and has minimal contact with the lecturer. Oladeji (2000) also stresses that distance education is considered as a branch of adult education where the clientele may comprise of those who have no exposure of any kind to formal education, or those who wish to supplement their formal education. Akintayo and Bunza (2000) characterise adults with professional responsibilities, social responsibilities and study on part–time basis as distance learning students. Sacchanand (2002) also reports that distance students are adults who are mature, employed and have family responsibilities apart from their willingness to take responsibility for their own education.

According to United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2002) distance learning is one of today’s most rapidly growing fields of education and training,
and has fast become an accepted and indispensable part of the mainstream of educational systems introduced in both developed and developing countries in order to:

i. increase access to learning and training opportunity through balancing inequalities between age groups;

ii. provide increased opportunities for updating, retraining and personal enrichment through extending geographical access to education;

iii. improve cost-effectiveness of educational resources through combining education with work and family life;

iv. improve the quality of the existing educational services; and,

v. enhance and consolidate capacity.

Edge and Edge (2002) also view the growth of distance education as being accompanied by increased scrutiny; not only from distance learning and academic scholars, but also from accrediting agencies and library professional associations.

Adesoye and Amusa (2011) opine that distance learning is a mode of study that empowers students to choose when and where they want to study. They view individuals who are constrained by jobs and family commitment but with the desire for higher education to be taken care of by distance learning programmes. Watson (1992) also view distance learning as a method of study that is pursued by students who are physically separated from their tutors and institution of instruction for the greater part of their study. However, she argues that the physical separation that exists between the students, their tutors and the institution of instruction distinguish distance
learning from other forms of education. She further reiterates that distance learning has added to the pool of opportunities for librarians to become creators of information through the development of new materials or re-packaging the information to suit particular needs. Appleton (1997) argues that distance learning systems create several disadvantages for remote students, as they are unable to visit the library because of their physical separation with the university.

Watson (1997) reiterates that distance learning enables individuals who, for domestic, national, economic or other reasons, are unable or unwilling to pursue their educational goals through conventional methods or face-to-face. She views the growth of distance learning as occasioned by the following factors:

i. the phenomenal growth of the world’s population leading to an unprecedented need or desire for education at all levels;

ii. many people wish to re-tool themselves to accommodate changes in the workplace or a desire for a career change;

iii. there may be the need or desire to effect a career change which requires an individual to acquire information, skills, aptitudes and attitudes that are new; and,

iv. the escalating costs of establishing conventional educational institutions has forced many governments to seek alternative means of providing education that is equitable in all respect to conventional education.

Moore (1990) opines that distance learning is a planned learning mode that normally occurs in a different place from conventional teaching and requires library and information support services to enable students to write coursework and prepare for examinations. Malki (2005) supports that
students on such programmes are often remote and do not have the same access to library and information services as conventional students. Galusha (1997) also opines that distance learning is provided to cover students in their homes and workplaces and provides them with learning resources to enable them to qualify without undergoing conventional learning. Singh [1997] also identifies distance learning as an educational approach which helps to bring education to the doorsteps of a large and varied clientele who can not benefit from the conventional system of education.

Hummel (2011) views distance learning as one way in which learners can study successfully, while still attending to other responsibilities at home and work. He also notes that geographical distance leads to some challenges with access to the necessary support services, especially when students do not have access to the Internet at home. He elaborates that… “it is worth noting that the students are facing academic impediments as they travel long distances to access library and information services to support their studies, leading to inadequacy learning materials”. Chikuya (2007) asserts that the inadequacy of learning materials is a major weakness faced by distance learning students.

However, Galusha (1997) and Mhishi et al (2012) acknowledge that notwithstanding major impediments in distance learning; students hail the programme as noble as it gives them opportunity to learn in a high degree of flexibility as they have greatest control over the time, place and pace of their education. Acharya (2012) also support the advantage of taking distance learning to the rural, remote and marginalized people, especially those practically confined to the villages due to family obligations, social challenges and financial constraints. However, Muphy (1992) observes that open universities tend to take distance students’ ability to use libraries and
other information services for granted as they do not incorporate in their courses the information literacy and retrieval skills, and other instructional programmes in the use of print and other learning materials available in their libraries.

2.3 The Conceptual Framework

There are various models of services described in the literature on the provision of library services that universities can use in their approaches to serving distance education students. These include the Association of College and Research Libraries’ (ACRL) Guidelines, the North Central Association (NCA) Best Practices, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Good Practices and others written by professional and accrediting agencies. After a close analysis of the models, the researcher chose the Association of Colleges and Research Libraries (ACRL) Guidelines as an appropriate framework for the study as the guidelines are applicable to many universities as they state that each student is entitled to library resources and services of the respective institution regardless of method of course delivery or location.

According to Oladokun (2002) the pioneers to take up the challenge of ensuring that library and information services were adequately provided for distance learners is the American Library Association, in 1931 after realising that students studying away from the main campus of their institutions were being disadvantaged because of the non-availability of library resources. Through this association, in 1967, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) developed guidelines on library and information services that were to be provided to this category of students. These guidelines require colleges and universities to ensure the provision of equitable library services to distance education students; ensure that services of high academic quality are provided to distance education learning programmes and assure accrediting agencies
that standards of high academic quality are being maintained in library services to distance learning programmes.

The ACRL Guidelines (2011) propose that institutions take responsibility for involving the library administration and other library personnel in the planning, developing and adding or changing of the distance learning programme from the earliest and onward. According to Oladokun (2002) the ACRL guidelines emphatically spell out details in terms of philosophy for distance library services, as they clearly state that irrespective of where the students maybe located, accessibility to adequate library services is important for any higher academic skills to be accomplished. The guidelines are built on the premise of access entitlement and the Bill of Rights for the distance learning community and were established due to the concerns for ensuring the delivery of equivalent library services and information resources to college and university students in remote settings. Oladokun (2002) illustrate that these guidelines were stemmed from the following increasingly critical factors:

i. distance learning has become a major growth sector in higher education.

ii. research has shown that access to library resources and services increases the quality of education through distance learning.

iii. the parent institution is primarily responsible for providing library services to distance learners.

iv. the parent institution is responsible for assuring that distance learners have equitable access to library resources and services that meet or exceed national and regional accreditation standards and professional association standards and guidelines.
v. Distance learners are offered access to library resources and services similar to those offered on-campus students.

vi. The parent institution must provide continuing financial support for addressing library needs of distance learners.

vii. The parent institution must ensure that distance learners have adequate training and resources available to successfully complete course requirements and acquire lifelong learning skills.

viii. Appropriate access to information resources for distance learners requires a designated librarian to facilitate the provision of library resources and services.

ix. Libraries should participate from the very beginning in the planning of distance learning programmes and courses; and,

x. Distance learners must be provided access to print, audio-visual and electronic resources, reference and referral services and information competency instruction, and access must be provided via traditional and electronic document delivery services, tailor-made borrowing privileges, telephone and e-mail contacts.

These guidelines and standards are built on the premise of access entitlement, whereby direct human access must be made available by universities to the distance learning community through instruction, interaction and intervention. According to Haynes (2002), the guidelines ask institutions to take responsibility for providing library services for distance students as they do for residential students. They encourage institutions to mail books from their libraries to students living away from the campus. ACRL (2004) assert that the guidelines have been necessitated by
the view that library reference services, document delivery services and many texts and databases are made available remotely through technology, therefore libraries should:

i. ensure the provision of equitable library services to both new and existing distance learning programmes

ii. ensure that services of high academic quality are provided to both new and existing distance learning programmes; and,

iii. assure accrediting agencies that standards of high academic quality are being maintained in library services to distance learning programmes.

Haynes (2002) also encourages academic libraries to support distance learners through the provision of rapid, reliable and secured access to electronic resources such as full-text catalogues and databases of scholarly journals, books, dissertations, newspapers and electronic book (e-books). In addition, document delivery and interlibrary loan services must also be available where full text access is not allowing distance learners to receive their information in a timely manner.

The ACRL (2008) guidelines also entail that colleges and universities must provide sufficient facilities, equipment and communication tools to attain the objectives of the distance learning programmes. Academic libraries are also encouraged by the guidelines to provide or secure convenient and direct access to library materials in appropriate formats that are of sufficient quality, depth, number, scope and currency to meet all students’ needs in fulfilling course assignments; enrich the academic programmes; meet teaching and research needs; support curricular needs; facilitate the acquisition of lifelong learning skills; accommodate students
with varying levels of technological access; and accommodate other informational needs of the distance learning community as appropriate.

Watson (1992) reiterates that since their inception in 1967, the guidelines have been adopted in colleges, universities and research libraries and have been widely deemed to be suitable for the practice of distance librarianship in many countries, with the University of South Africa (UNISA) providing library services to its over 126 000 students in remote areas (Wooliscroft 1997). In line with the guidelines, in 1994, three university libraries of the University of Aegean in Greece, Dublin City University in the Republic of Ireland and the University of Central Lancashire through the Centre for Research in Library and Information Management developed a project coded “Libraries without walls: the delivery of library services to distant users” to explore the delivery of library and information services through the use of information technology. According to Wooliscroft (1997), the University of Otago in New Zealand has introduced key issues such as response time, information literacy and proactive coordination between teaching and library staff in course design to cater for remote students.

2.4 The characteristics of distance learning students

Jolly (1998) defines a distance learner as one who does not study on campus and who does not have immediate and easy access to academic library resources. Cajkler (1998) asserts that distance learners are often mature and often live far away from the host institution and therefore do not have the same opportunities as those who live on campus. Sacchanand (2002) reported that distance learners’ characteristics are different from that of students in traditional universities and listed their characteristics as;
i. adult learners

ii. mature

iii. employed and have family responsibilities; and,

iv. higher motivation, and are willing to take responsibility for their own education.

Jolly (1998) opines that this kind of student is usually working full-time, has family commitments and assignment deadlines to meet. Rogers (1986) also point out that distance learners are mostly adults with their own set pattern of learning and attitude towards education in general. However, Sacchanand (2002) further advances that these students have clear cut-goals, self-directed, study on independent basis, learn in a variety of ways, take control over their learning and often experience a feeling of isolation and remoteness from other students. Kavulya (2004) in his study of distance education in four universities in Kenya opined that some of the students have little or no exposure to library use and this affects their access to library resources.

Downham (2011) support that distance learning students are a group with certain defining characteristics, such as, some are in full-time employment or have families to care for. He elaborates that most of them are mature students who have not studied for some time, which may mean they need extra help with study or information skills, and further advances the view that they need a lot of support and encouragement as they can sometimes feel quite isolated. Boadi and Letsolo (2004) agree that most of them lack confidence, as they may be returning to study long after initial qualification and be unfamiliar with modern information seeking facilities. However, they argue that these students comprise of a mixed group with a wide range of abilities.
as they are at different ages and stages of development and may react in different ways to the very varied changes they are each experiencing in their lives.

Merriam and Caffarella (1991) are of the opinion that adult learners take the initiative with or without the help of others. That is, they take responsibility for planning, carrying out and evaluating their own learning experiences. Macauley and McKnight (1998) and Cajkler (1998) said there a degree of independent in distance learning students. Knowles (1998) states that independent study is self-directed, which means learning on one’s own, and those adult learners are usually self-directed. Boadi and Letsolo (2004) argue that learning on one’s own does not necessarily mean learning alone; rather, adults often use other people as helpers and resources in their self-directed learning activities. Boadi and Letsolo (2004) further elaborate that locating appropriate and useful resources is the key aspect of self-directed learning. Merriam and Caffarella (1991) divided such resources into the following categories: human resources (such as professionals and friends) non human resources (such as books, magazines and computer programmes) and group resources (such as hobby clubs and self-help group).

2.5 Library and information services to distance learning students

It is of no doubt that the quality of any academic programme can only be enhanced when adequate library services are accessible to all students irrespective of where they are located. The provision of adequate and quality library and information services is important as it gives instructions in information seeking, gathering and usage, thereby enhancing distance learning programmes. Snyder et al (2011) advance some important insights into the role of libraries in distance learning as instructional designers and multimedia development. Cassner and Adams (1997) support that distance learners should have access to library services and resources.
It is generally perceived that in all institutions of learning, a library is known to complement and enhance the quality of the educational programmes. Oladokun (2002) reiterates that many distance education students require library and information services as they find it tedious if not impracticable to leave their occupational and responsibilities to attend school. He emphasises on a marriage of convenience, between the distance education students and the attainment of their educational aspirations through the maximum use of library and information services. However, Bolton, Unwin and Steevens (1997) conducted a survey of 1000 distance education students in 19 universities in the United Kingdom and revealed a depressing picture of the lack of recognition of the need to provide library and information services to the students.

Cassner and Adams (1998) predict four trends of providing library and information services to distance education students as follows:

i. Firstly universities believe there will be an increased global reliance on technology and distance education, and therefore libraries are expected to rely increasingly on the internet in linking distance education students with available resources and services.

ii. A second trend will involve further collaboration and cooperation to increase quality, equity and access for distance education students. This collaboration involves partnerships between librarians and other stakeholders such as information systems experts and other institutions

iii. A third prediction is that distance education and conventional library boundaries will continue to blur; and,
iv. The fourth prediction is that distance education paradigm will continue to change as the knowledge base expands due to the growth in literature related to library and information services for the distance education students.

In view of the above, Cassner and Adams (1998) also expect institutions not only to deliver courses, but also to provide the support services necessary to enable students to be successful. Watson (1997) asserts that distance education students experience a multiplicity of problems as a result of isolation from their tutors and fellow students, therefore, owing to distance; many are rarely able to visit the libraries. In comparison with students in conventional programmes, Kamau (1997) has the view that distance education students are disadvantaged because of the following:

i. they study in isolation from their lecturers and their peers and thus are denied the full benefits of constant interaction with lecturers and other students in their learning endeavours;

ii. they combine their studies with family responsibilities, occupational demands and wider community commitments. These responsibilities have been found to distract the students from their learning activities;

iii. they do not benefit from a concentration of learning resources and encounter study problems due to inadequate information resources; and,

iv. many distance education students have underdeveloped study skills and often lack confidence in their approach to learning.
Sithole (2011) also has the view that libraries are meant to complement the education process, without which much of the education desired of distance education students could not be achieved. He also argues that although many consider the library to be the heart of the university, the use of the library by students on distance education is not incorporated into courses prepared for distance delivery. However, provision of library materials is a key component of distance education as Dillon, Gunawardena and Parker (1992) note that library resources and services are very important to distance learners’ success as their courses require access to library materials. Watson (1998) also notes that distance learning students are entitled to library services and resources equivalent to those provided for students in traditional settings.

According to Igwe (1995), library services are indispensable in every facet of higher education and Jagannathan (2006) also notes that library services have always been a major focus for all kinds of learning, either formal or informal. Watson (2006) further opines that the library is at the heart of any university as it provides access to information, specialist help support, and use of technology and is a place to study alone or with fellow students. Cassner and Adams (1999) reiterate that library resources and services are an essential component of any educational experience for completion of coursework assignments and examination preparations.

Watson (1992, 1998), Appleton (1997), Cavanagh and Tucker (1997) all advance the fact that access to quality library and information services is a critical factor in any academic programme of merit and call for academic institutions running distance learning programmes to provide library and information services to their learners. According to Kelley et al (2000), the need for library resources and services to support academic programmes was realized earlier on and equity of access to materials to distance learning students was a prime concern. In support of
library services, Steele (1997) of the University of West Indies undertook an empirical research and unanimously found that 91.4% of the students surveyed said library support was an important component in the success of their studies.

However, Watson (2003) identifies basic library and information services distance learners needs as;

i. access to information resources such as texts, supplementary reading and reference services;

ii. learning how to find information needed from the information available; and,

iii. develop ways of applying the information sourced and to make sound information-based decisions.

According to Cassner and Adams (1999), distance learners should have access to the following library services and resources:

i. Reference assistance – libraries should provide answers to reference questions and the questions may be to know about the library services and resources available in the library;

ii. Bibliographic instruction and information services- distance learners should be provided with instruction on how to access the library electronic resources and services. The students should be provided with basic skills as well as information on how to search the library’s online catalogue for books and citations for journal articles independently;
iii. Access to library materials—distance learners should be entitled to borrowing facilities and should be provided with the option of receiving materials through document delivery services or inter-library loans in the shortest time;

iv. Means of contacting librarians and staff—distance learners should be provided with means of contacting librarians and library staff which may include, phones, e-mails or fax machines. In this age of ICTs, social media sites or network are now being used as means of contacting librarians; and,

v. Documented policies and procedures—this means that distance students should have access to current documented library policies and procedures, this include; print handouts and or web pages or homepages that mainly address library services for distance learners.

However, Oladokun (2002) notes that when the British Open University (BOU) was established in 1969, it avoided the responsibility of providing library and information services to its students and directed them to rely on services of public and other university libraries for their information needs. Watson (1999) suggests that in order to provide quality library services for distance learning programmes, it is necessary for institutions offering such programmes to institute a philosophy that recognizes the provision of library services to their students. Bobb-Semple (1986) in his opening speech on the theme of library services to distance learning students in Australia has this to say “…in the development of distance education, libraries have a central place as they supply crucial learning resources”. He declares that without quality library services, the success of distance learning in Australia would not continue.
Gupta (2000) views that the role of library services is to contribute to the excellence of the distance learning through creation of learning and study environment to support the teaching, research, and personal development by facilitating access to the sources and collections of information. Bobb-Semple (1997) bemoan the need for adequate library services and declares that access to adequate and relevant information resources contributed greatly to ensuring equity and achieving parity. He views the existence of an effective and efficient library service as a key requirement of any distance education programme of quality. Omogbhe (2011) also opines that a library is the nerve centre of any educational institution as it promotes the acquisition of reading, inquiry and independent thinking through the provision of resources to support teaching and learning activities.

Mabawonku (2004) agrees that libraries house information materials in various formats, such as electronic sources like CD-ROM to support teaching and learning activities. However, Omogbhe (2011) reiterates that library services are essential support services to distance education students. Sacchanand (2002) also supports that distance learners should access library and educational resources and services in various ways, which can be face to face, mediated printed materials or using such media like telephone, or the internet.

In a report on library services to distance learners in Canada, India and the United Kingdom Open Universities, Watson (1992) notes that while many Canadian distance learners had library materials sent to them by mail, many students in India had access to library materials only when they went on site and borrowed in person. However, John (1977) in a study that examined provision of libraries in English-speaking countries of Africa found that the existence of and adequate provision of library services significantly enhanced the success of and quality of
national education programmes. He bemoans countries where expansion of formal education is not supported by a similar growth in library provision, as their quality of education suffer. Another survey report of student needs for reference material, the sources they use and the effects of the external system within which they study, Winter and Cameron (1983) found that the provision of books for reading as well as study guides did not reduce students’ use of libraries.

Rodrigues (1996) and Riggs (1997) both argue that apart from the manner in which the information is accessed, requested and delivered, the same resources are required, the same questions are asked and the same quality of service is expected. Dugan (1996) and Rodrigues (1997) have the same sentiments that the library needs of distance learners are not unique, as they have the same library and information needs as on campus students. Tarrant (2008) has the view that libraries are at the centre of universities since their earliest foundation and Haggstrom (2004) opines that libraries must supplement the classroom and the traditional textbook. Niemi et al (1998) demonstrate a great need for library services by stating that without ready access to library services, students’ learning experience may be unacceptably bound and controlled. Ojedokun (2000) also asserts that the provision of library and information services to distance learners is central to quality education. Bhatti (2012) agrees that distance learning students require access to the full range of library services; from reference assistance and bibliographic instruction to interlibrary loan, course reserves, circulation, and information network connections. ACRL (2011) asserts that access to adequate library services and resources is essential regardless of where students are located and that members of the distance learning community are entitled to library services and resources equivalent to those provided for students in traditional campus settings.
Guerrero et al (2002) suggest that library services need to be accessible to the students so that they can approach the learning experience with academic rigor. Watson (1997) reiterates that the provisions of equitable and quality library and information services to distance learning students had become a major aspect in institutions of higher learning, the world over. Burgstahler (2002) and Candy (1994) identify the importance of providing equitable and quality library and information services to everyone for the accomplishment of academic requirements as they emphasize that graduates should leave university equipped with information literacy skills and strategies to locate, access, retrieve, evaluate, manage and make use of information in a variety of fields, rather than with a finite body of knowledge that will soon be outdated and irrelevant.

Caspers, Fritts and Gover (2001) agree that library support is a key element in distance learning programmes. Barron (2002) also points out that students who are truly ‘distance’ learners need specialised library services, because they cannot access the physical collections and in-person services offered by their campus libraries. He further expresses that libraries are in the business of helping students get the information they want, when they want it, and getting to them regardless of where they are physically located. However, Ogunsola (2004) thinks that if universities are to produce students who are self-reliant, and better able to fit into their immediate environment and interact successfully with the world at large, they need well developed distance education system which is well supported by adequate library facilities.

University libraries need to deliver services by means which meet the needs of the students, as Wittkopt (2003) suggests that library courses should provide students with a set of library skills including the research process skills. However, Rowland and Rubbert (2001) in their study on information needs of distance learners reported that university libraries did not cater for the
specific needs of distance learners. However, de Jong and Branch (2005) express concern over results of studies that indicated that students do not take full advantage of library services provided by their institutions. The authors emphasise on the need for library orientation and library utilisation as critical to distance learners as it is for traditional on-campus students. Guerrero et al (2007) have the view that libraries need to change their perception and adopt the ACRL guidelines to provide equivalent resources to distance learning students. Heller-Ross (1996) opines that Feinberg Library in Australia offers every distance learning student equivalent access to library services as outlined by ACRL guidelines.

In providing service to its distance learners, the University of Queensland (1991) operated a postal service to the remote students enrolled with the university. Crocker (1991) agrees that materials were sent to students through a courier service operated by the Australian Post, but students must return materials at their own cost. She states that 28,000 postal loans were sent to students from the library and also notes that the university library opens for extended hours and the library operated an answering telephone service for after-hour queries. Bockett, Margden and Pitchforth (1997) also note that at Massey University in New Zealand, a postal library service was established to give distance learners’ access to library services. They also found that the library was also using the inter-library loan facility. Meacham and Macpherson (1997) reported that at Charles Sturt University (CSU) in Australia, the library had an integrated computerized system which supports acquisitions, catalogues and loans and provide the following services:

i. **Loans**: most materials could be borrowed for two weeks with only one renewal

ii. **Returns**: while the university paid forward mailing costs, students paid for return of items
iii. **Photocopies**: effort were made to ensure that requests for photocopies comply with Australian copyright legislation

iv. **Information and reference services**: literature searches providing lists of citations are provided to enable students to access materials in the university or other libraries

v. **Contact**: students request library services by telephone, post, facsimile or e-mail. Toll free phones and after-hours answering facilities are provided

vi. **Use of other libraries**: all tertiary institutions allow use of the collections within their libraries; and,

vii. **Reciprocal arrangements**: three universities offering distance support (Charles Sturt University, South Australia and Deakin) agreed to extend access to remote students and if one university does not have certain materials, are supplied from another university.

Bockett, Margden and Pitchforth (1997) further articulate that students also benefit from a well established programme of library instruction which enabled them to acquire library research skills and made good use of the library. They listed the following services which the students could request:

i. books are delivered by courier and issued for a period of three weeks

ii. photocopy services for journals and past examination papers; and,

iii. library staff supply bibliographic lists from which students select what they want

Solomon (1997) also notes that at the University of Otago, in New Zealand, students have full and equal rights to access the more than 1,35 million volumes held by various libraries located on campus. He opines that maximising library facilities to distance learners did not stop at books, but included access to journals and other electronic resources. However, Lee (1999) of the University of Washington identifies that library services to distance learners were limited and irregular, and she declares that “…library not only had to identify the needs of students, but also
had to promote and inform its users of the kind of materials and services that are available”. She also identifies four main library and information services critical to distance learning as:

i. establishing a collection of materials

ii. providing document services

iii. teaching about library resources and technology; and,

iv. answering reference and information questions

However, Heller-Ross (1999) advocates that distance learning students require access to the full range of library services, from reference assistance and bibliographic instruction to inter-library loan, course reserves, and circulation and information network connections. She also posit that access is provided via an expansive array of electronic and print resources, and assistance is provided through librarian site visits, printed student guide to library services, telephone and e-mail reference services. Behrens and Grobler (1997) point out that the use of latest information technology is the order of the day at UNISA library and declare that the entire collection can be accessed through an OPAC system from any computer connected to the internet. They state that apart from such services, small collections are maintained in branch libraries at the regional offices and students access these collections either by personal visits to one of the UNISA libraries or have materials posted to them. The authors also agree that students could forward requests by post, fax, telex, or by leaving a message on the voicemail of video text. Behrens and Grobler (1997) also discovered that at UNISA library, copyright permission for reproduction of articles is obtained from publishers and relevant items for a particular course are bound in one volume.
In providing library services to distance learners, Watson (1999) opines that it is important that libraries should collaborate with agencies that are external to the library because it would be impossible to provide quality library and information services to distance learners without their assistance. Nduka (2012) and Watson (1999) both emphasize that library should expand the use of technology in providing library services to distance learners, as these technologies have served to reduce the barriers to library and information services that distance learners experience due to distance. In support of this view, Oladokun (2000) has the opinion that distance will be narrowed if modern technology is fully exploited in providing library services to distance learners. He views distance as the barrier hindering distance learners from getting quality library services.

2.6 High academic quality services to distance education students

Black (2000) opines that the quality of distance education was measured in terms of academic value, recognition, quality of course content, long term stability and availability of the courses, credibility of the source and availability of library support services. In order to provide high academic quality to distance education students, the ACRL Guidelines for Distance Learning Library Services (2000) assert that access to adequate library services and resources is essential for the attainment of superior academic skills regardless of where students are located. Jagannathan (1997) also asserts that library staff must have the necessary tools to provide the up-to-date information that distance education students need to accomplish course requirements. The American Library Association ALA (2006) judges high academic quality through the library’s collection on usability, comprehensiveness, diversity and size, and stipulates that the library should provide varied, authoritative and up-to-date resources that support the mission and needs of the students. Jagannathan (1997) also has the view that distance education students need
access to library and information resources for both onsite reference and for home study, and these materials must be made available in the library or accessed through interlibrary loans from other institutions. John (1997) agrees that access to libraries is the only kind of support available to the distance education students.

The American Library Association further elaborates that, for the library to provide high academic quality, library staff must also possess strong technical and technological skills that help them to identify and analyse the information needs of the students. The ACRL guidelines encourage academic libraries to have a basic menu of library resources and services for distance users which should include e-books, e-reserves, e-reference and interlibrary loan tailored to meet the distance education students. The guidelines further urge academic libraries to have user-focused approach in providing library resources and services to distance education students.

According to Cavanagh (2000), serving distance education students requires proactive intervention by library staff to ensure that resources are made available in adequate numbers to meet the needs of the students. Caspers, Fritts and Gover (2000) also urge that library resources and services in institutions of higher learning must meet the needs of the students, wherever they are located. The authors also view libraries as integral part of the academic mission which can enhance a university’s reputation by providing access to world-class information resources and services. The ACRL Guidelines (2011) also state that the library must be a full and active partner in the planning, implementation and delivery of quality distance learning programmes. They further emphasises that the library is a key support structure by virtue of its role as a contact and guide for the students in seeking information and resources beyond the provided fundamental course materials.
2.7 Use of information technology in providing library services

Nduka (2011) reveals that the emergence of technology has offered institutions running distance education programmes different options in the delivery of library and information services. She opines that the use of technology has reduced the barriers experienced by distance learning students in accessing library and information resources. She was quick to point out that many libraries in developed countries are already using information and communication technologies (ICT) as their main method of delivering library services through online chat rooms, e-mail services, teleconferencing, free online databases and reference services. In her view, this gave students the opportunity to search electronic databases and access the online catalogues, examine abstracts and, to some extent, read full text documents.

Watson (2003, 1999) also reveals that another use of technology in the provision of library and information services to distance learners is the delivery of library services such as information literacy, bibliographic instruction and reference skills as online courses. However, she notes that some institutions in developing countries did not rely on ICTs to provide access to library services to their distance learners due to high cost of the technology and also a large number of distance learners would not be able to participate fully or benefit from it. Brophy (2003) uses the term ‘networked learning’ in which she describes ICTs affecting learning and enabling new methods of delivery.

As Oladokun (2002) notes that the nature of distance learning prevents students from visiting their university library, Appleton (1997) regrets that remote students cannot browse the academic collections of their university and are unable to make personal selections from the library materials held by their university, and therefore proposes electronic library services as an
effective strategy to counteract the difficulties. Oladokun (2002) also reiterates that the advent and application of ICT has heralded some radical changes in educational patterns all over the world. He also notes that prior to the evolution of ICTs, the option available for the distance learners was to go to a public or academic library in order to obtain the information they need, and posits that the new dispensation has also revolutionised library and information services.

Brophy (2003) opines that ICTs have allowed and encouraged new forms of interactions and connections among students and between learners and tutors, and between learning community and its learning resources. Rio (2003) also reiterates that technology has a close relationship with the teaching of distance education because it intervenes in the separation between teacher and learners through the use of print, radio, telephone and computers. Al-Oraini and Kaur (2007) reveal that digital and networked technologies have been very important developments in making it possible for instructors and learners to access a wealth of information quickly, easily and interactively in both face-to-face and remote education settings.

Kanjilil (1997) also advances the fact that each new technological development has an impact on libraries and information services, and asserts that ICTs have affected most of library routine operations such as circulation and cataloguing. Watson (1998) also reiterates that the convergence of technology and communication offer distance education institutions an array of options to deliver library and information services. She declares that the expanded use and role of technology in the delivery of library and information services has served to reduce the barriers to library and information services that are occasioned by distance for these students. She further argues that many libraries have placed most of their services on-line which makes it possible to reach out to distance students regardless of their location.
Watson (1997) and Behrens and Grobler (1997) contend that online catalogues help students to search databases, examine abstracts and read full text documents as they conduct researches. Heller-Ross (1999) also observes that the new electronic information environment is pushing many libraries to re-think their services and re-engineer their organisations. She also reiterates that electronic resources have enticed more students into the library’s virtual spaces where they are demanding virtual service and instructions, and emphasises that in this environment, it makes sense to take advantages of this blurring and melding to improve library services for all students. However, Oladokun (2002) has the view that today it is no longer problematic for students from distant places to gain access to information, as long as there is a computer, a telephone line and modem. He subscribes to the fact that it is possible for students to obtain most of the information they need through online access to catalogues and other electronic databases via the internet.

Barnard (1999) suggests that…“because of the technological advancement, academic libraries have seen a distinct shift in the way that much of their information has been made available over the past few years”, and advances the fact that 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 the world wide web sites on the internet. He concludes that the advent of digital media has brought the ability to provide more library services to distant students, while minimising the need for travel to a campus library. In support, Cavanagh and Tucker (1997) recognise that the application of ICTs cut across both developed and developing worlds, but quick to note that in advanced countries, provision of library services to distance students is turning increasingly towards electronic access to libraries and their resources.
Of importance, Stallings (1997) at the University of Phoenix observes that the university has an enrolment of 55,000 adult students, who all access library services online as there is no physical library collection. However, drawing examples from Australia, Meacham and Macpherson (1997) also report that a number of Australian university libraries provide online access to catalogues of their own and of other universities for distance students who have access to a compatible personal computer and a modem. Marie-Therese (1997) also noted the array of technology-based information services that can overcome the perception of tyranny of distance and lack of immediate access to library resources and services.

However, Heller-Ross (1996) has the view that distance learning programmes are designed and heavily marketed for adults who lack library research skills or may never have used an academic library, or may never have used computerised research databases. In this regard, librarians must offer tours, training sessions, and research instruction to assist students with locating and using library resources. However, Rice (2003) believes that, those students’ levels of expertise and abilities to locate information are critical to their studies.

2.8 Information needs of distance learning students

Claudia de Four (1997) laments that distance education students have information needs as well, though they can not go to the library, but the library must deploy approaches that will get information to students. Boadi and Letsolo (2004) point out that information needs originate from the desire to know or to clear the uncertainty and that becomes a motivation which propels the problem into need. They opine that information need arises from an information problem, which comes when there is a gap in one’s knowledge about something, and normally in such a situation, the information seeker feels uncertainty.
Pao (1989) takes the point that an information need is often the result of an unsolved problem which an individual realises that his or her knowledge is insufficient to perform a given task. Haruna and Mabawonku (2001) also have the view that information needs arise when the state of possessed knowledge is less than that needed to deal with some issues. Reitz (2004) also describe information need as a gap in a person’s knowledge that, when experienced at the conscious level as a question gives rise to a search for an answer. Adenji (2007) also writes that information need arises when there is lack of information needed to execute a task, and the task could be for class assignment.

Similarly Kuhlthau (1993) gives the view that at the initial stage, a person- for example, a student preparing for an assignment- perceives knowledge or an understanding gap; a problem arises that has no obvious solutions and negative feelings of apprehension and uncertainty arise. She further outlines that the student consequently becomes worried whether or not relevant and timely information will become available in order to help him or her to complete the assignment. Such a state of anxiety can greatly inhibit the ability to learn and work logically and effectively.

However, Boadi and Letsolo (2004) lament that the student’s thoughts could turn toward comprehending the need and planning strategies to resolve the situation. Thanuskadi (2012) emphasises that it is desirable for librarians to understand the purpose for which information is required, the environment in which the user operates, user’s skills in identifying the needed information and barriers to information, as this enable the library to re-orient its collections, services and activities to synchronise them with the information seeking behavior of its users. Bandara (1993) has the view that if library is to provide any meaningful information services, it must take the information seekers’ habits into consideration. Krackler (2002) also opines that
actions taken by the student include talking with peers, moderators, professionals and others who might prove to be helpful in determining the size and scope of the problem, understanding the nature of the information need and finding a way to solve it. Kuhlthau (1993) says there will be a sense of relief and satisfaction if the search is successful or of anxiety and dissatisfaction if it is not successful. Mhishi et al (2012) have the view that distance learning requires a collaborative effort between students, librarians and lecturers unbounded by the traditional limits of time and single-instructor effort.

2.9 Constraints in the provision of library services to distance students

Depicting the problems faced by students of distance education programmes, Mirtz (2010) declares that… “indeed, the library seems misplaced, ignored or forgotten in many distance education programmes; as scarce resources, financial constraints, lack of trained staff, inability to make maximum use of available assets and death of modern technological instruments predominate”. Kaye (1981) states that students need to have access to a well stocked library and also reiterates that absence of library and information services is the single most serious limitation of distance learning at university level. Aina (2008) identifies that inadequate library and information services support as the most fundamental problem affecting the quality of distance education programmes.

Oladokun’s (2009) study at the University of Botswana discovered that the university library did not adequately cater for the library and information needs of students. Another study conducted by Msuya and Maro (2002) on the provision of library and information services to distance learners at the Open University of Tanzania also found that the library and information services were not well developed to support the academic programmes of distance learners. They also
found that due to lack of proper library services, some of the learners withdrew from the programmes. Ojedokun (2000) identifies the following as problems faced by libraries in the provision of information:

i. inadequate funding

ii. inadequate staffing

iii. communication problems due to distance

iv. insufficient communication between academic departments and librarians

v. open and distance learners lack information literacy skills

vi. inadequate copies of library materials for distance learners; and,

vii. lack of enabling infrastructure including IT infrastructure

Cavanagh (2000) views greatest challenges faced by libraries in the provision of information services as follows

i. the students may never come to the library and are unable to receive information literacy training

ii. if they live in a small isolated or rural community, they frequently do not have access to a library and even if they receive training, they soon forget most of what they have learned

iii. they face isolation and lack of peer support and miss the networking so useful to on-campus students
iv. they frequently do not know or don’t find out what services are available or how to access them as their library expectations are often very low

v. they may face delays and expense in contacting the library and obtaining materials and in returning them; and,

vi. library services are not adequately publicized and students are not aware of them.

Jaggen and Waddell (1991), also assert that distance learning students, especially those who are rural based end up using only the instructor-provided materials than any other sources as they are cut with physical distance from sources of information. Appleton (1997) asserts that remote students, because of their separation are unable to visit the library at their university, cannot browse the academic collections of their university, are unable to make personal selections from the library materials held by their university and are forced to rely on others to make decisions on several aspects of their use of library and information materials. She also outlines that physical divide makes it difficult for the library to supply these students with library service and deny them access to educational sessions on library use and information retrieval.

However, Oladokun (2002) subscribes to the view that, the nature of distance learning has made distance learners the most difficult library customers to satisfy. Watson (1998) also has the view that the delivery of library and information services to those who learn at a distance is undisputedly the most pressing challenge that distance librarians encounter. In view of this, Aguilar and Kascus (1991) suggest that new regulations pertinent to libraries should be established in institutions offering distance education. They reiterate that there is no doubting the
fact that establishing these new regulations is a major step forward as they have great potential for improving library services to distance learning students.

Kamau (1997) opines that distance learners face a multiplicity of problems as a result of isolation from their tutors and fellow students. She reiterates that owing to distance, many students are rarely able to visit the libraries of the university; therefore an extended borrowing period would be a considerable assistance. Omogbhe (2011) identifies inadequate reading materials, non-recency of library materials and inadequate library use skills as major constraints that affect the use of library by distance learners. Mabawonku (2004) reports that lack of library use instructions, borrowing facilities and tight schedules affect their use of library, while Oladokun (2002) attributes this to lack of current library materials. However, Shouse’s (1995) survey found that students identified convenience as the most important factor in their information source selection.

A study of the use of libraries by open university students conducted by Wilson (1975) at the Yorkshire University found that open university students are part-time students who include housewives, teachers, accountants, bankers, farm workers, or whatever, and noted that 62% of the 134 respondents indicated opening hours and factors associated with travelling times and costs as the most frequent difficulties of getting into a library. de Jong and Branch (2005) also identified distance learning students as those who are employed and attending school part-time, raising a family, returning to education, attempting to apply learning to career or personal needs, restricted by time and distance in completing coursework, and having out-of-date library skills. The authors opine that such characteristics influence whether distance learners make use of the library services provided to them.
In a survey conducted by Msuya and Maro (2001) at the Open University of Tanzania, found that most students affected are those from remote rural areas where there were no other library services at all. The study also found that the established library system of the Open University of Tanzania (OUT) was not well stocked and the system could not comfortably support distance learning students. In addition, Steele (1997) also reveal that the University of West Indies’ thrust was not matching with the library and information services provided, as the library was not adequately funded, book stocks outdated and not adequately support the students needs. Watson (1992) laments that without financing, there can be no library to distance learners and declares that poor funding of library services affect the quality of services.

However, Muswaz (2003) conducted a research on Distance Education Library Services in Swaziland and found that the respondents complained about the following:

i. insufficient information resources

ii. outdated materials

iii. inadequate staff support

iv. mutilated and missing books; and,

v. unreliable photocopying services

Ault (2002) mentions the following as barriers to providing library services to distance learners;

i. geographical: learners in rural or remote areas are at a disadvantage, as they might not have internet or local libraries

ii. technological: where internet is available, the bandwidth may be limited; and,
iii. budget and staffing: library services for distance learners can be expensive since many of these services require an addition or revision to current services which may require more money and staff.

Ault (2002) then suggest that the library must balance the need to offer access to library and information services with the above restrictions. In support Bhatti (2012) also suggest that the library must develop innovative and cost effective ways to deliver library and information services to distance education students.

Summary

In this chapter, a review of literature was undertaken to examine the importance of the library in distance education environment. It has been established through the review of literature that the provision of library and information services to distance learners is critical for any institution offering distance learning programmes as various authors and their experiences in the provision of library services have been cited and mentioned. The next chapter is going to discuss the research methodology.
CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research methods employed by the researcher in the study, the research design adopted, sampling techniques used and the research instruments used to gather data for the study.

3.2 Research Methodology

It was very important for the researcher to consider the levels of methodological dimensions in this study as they enabled him to identify the most relevant and applicable methodological paradigm that led to the successful completion of the study. Mouton (1996), believes that methodological paradigms, for instance those related to qualitative, quantitative and participatory action contain assumptions and values that can be chosen and used under specific circumstances. Boaduo (2005, 2006) also posit that where the researcher has to make a choice concerning methods for the study, the researcher has to encounter both the actual applicable methods and techniques and the underlying philosophy regarding their use in the study.

Research methodology can be distinguished on the basis of data collection methods used in a study and in the context of this study, the researcher chose a mixed-methods research design, where both qualitative and quantitative techniques are used concurrently in the data collection process. Quantitative methods allowed the researcher to use interviews and questionnaires which gave meaningful comparison of responses across participants. Qualitative methods allowed greater participation and interaction between the researcher and the study participants.
3.3 Research Design

To achieve the set objectives, the researcher chose a mixed-methods research design, where both qualitative and quantitative data were collected concurrently in the study. Mixed-methods research design allowed the researcher to use both structured and unstructured questions in the data gathering process. Teddie and Tashakkori (2009) posit that mixed-methods focus on numeric and narrative data and analysis. Johnson (2007) reveal that mixed-methods enables researchers to construct questionnaires with both open-ended (qualitative) and closed-ended (quantitative) questions. The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative methods as they complemented each other in data collection and analysis. According to Zaidah (2007) mixed-methods research design is widely recognized in many social science studies especially when in-depth explanations of a social behavior are sought after.

The basic idea underpinned the choice of the researcher was that the mixed-method approach can reduce biases or deficiencies caused by one method of inquiry. Sechrest and Sidana (1995) support that the growth in the mixed-methods movement has the potential to reduce some of the problems associated with singular methods. They argue that quantitative and qualitative techniques within the same framework incorporate the strengths of both methodologies. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2007) also have the view that by narrowing the divide between quantitative and qualitative techniques, mixed-methods research has a great potential to promote a shared responsibility in the quest for attaining accountability. However, Blake (1989), Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989), Rossman and Wilson (1991), Creswell and Plan Clark (2007) among others used mixed-methods research designs in their various researches and yielded positive results.
3.4 Sampling Procedures

The researcher chose a sample that ensured adequate representation of the major population involved in the study. Sampling was done in two stages. The first stage used the probability methods whereby students in part 2, part 3 and part 4 were randomly chosen because of their position to inform the researcher as to what their experiences have been. The researcher deliberately left out the part 1 students on the premise that they did not have enough experience in using the regional library. The second stage involved the use of non-probability methods, where purposive or judgmental sampling was used to choose the only 2 library staff, the regional director and all the 15 programme coordinators on the premise that they had knowledge about the provision of library and information services to distance education students.

A targeted sample size of a survey of 100 respondents drawn from students in part 2, part 3 and part 4 were randomly chosen basing on Alrick and Settle’s (1985) view that this figure is the minimum limit for a survey of a large population. However, on the tutorial day when the questionnaires were administered, only 80 students were present and were randomly given the questionnaires. Of these 80 respondents, 55 responded to the students’ questionnaire, while 12 programme coordinators responded to the programme coordinators’ questionnaire. The discrepancy in the turnout for the students was attributed to their scattered nature as information was received that some students did not attend tutorials. To those who were present, some were reluctant to answer the questionnaire as they were under pressure to complete assignments and listen to their tutors. However, in the sampling process, the researcher bore in mind Creswell’s (2006) central idea that if participants are purposefully chosen, their views would reflect and provide a good qualitative study.
3.5 Research Instruments and Data Collection Procedures

The researcher designed the questionnaires basing on the objectives of the study and also on the ACRL guidelines for the provision of equitable and quality library and information services to distance learning students. However, the scattered nature of distance education students posed the greatest problem in getting them to complete the questionnaire; therefore the researcher used the weekend school tutorials where students were at one place.

In designing the questionnaires, the researcher also put into consideration the views of Cohen and Manion (1989) on what constitute a good questionnaire. They declare that an ideal questionnaire in unambiguous and should minimise potential errors from respondents. Oladokun (2002) also argues that since the respondents’ participation is voluntary, a questionnaire has to help in engaging their interest, encouraging their cooperation and eliciting answers as close as possible to the truth. He also has the view that a questionnaire must be simple and easy to understand, well ordered and not too time-consuming to complete. Malhotra (1996) emphasises that a questionnaire must uplift, motivate and encourage respondents to become involved in the interview to cooperate and be part of the research process.

The researcher took the various views raised by different authors and designed simple and straightforward unambiguous questionnaires which helped him to obtain the data needed to complete the research project. He included open-ended questions to solicit respondents to offer their views, comments, criticisms, ideas and opinions on issues pertaining to the provision of library and information services to them as distance learners. The structured questions solicited the demographic information such as age, gender, programme enrolled for, and year of
enrolment and employment status. This assisted the researcher to assess how long a respondent has been in a programme.

In answering the questionnaires, the respondents were asked to indicate yes or no, give their views and the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements on a five-point Likert-scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. They were also told not to write their names on the questionnaire for anonymity and confidentiality. However, they were encouraged to be open and honest in their responses and to provide much detailed information on open-ended questions.

The questionnaire method was chosen as it permits wide coverage in a short space of time. It is relatively cheap and permits gathering of both quantitative and qualitative data necessary for the study. The structured questions have the advantage of quantifying the results and make it easier for the researcher to calculate and correlate the findings and the unstructured questions help to minimise bias that can arise in response to structured questions (Maisiri 2006). However, notwithstanding the advantages, the questionnaire also has some shortcomings as it does not allow probing of more information in case the respondent fails to give answers or just give short answers.

The researcher also prepared an interview guide with open-ended questions to assist him to solicit information on the ground on how distance education and the library services to learners were run at the regional library. He conducted question and answer sessions with the regional director and the library staff. The researcher also solicited for more data and clarifications on the provision of library and information services. Interviews, according to Yin (1994), are one of the most important sources of information, as they allowed the researcher to probe the respondents’
opinions and ideas. They gave the researcher an understanding of the real situation on the ground as he managed to probe more data where the respondents gave short answers. The researcher managed to clarify questions and judged the extent to which the research was treated by the respondents. However, he noticed some shortcomings as there were some biases in the way certain questions were answered. Overall, the interviews gave the researcher more complete answers to the subject under study as the researcher evoked more information from respondents.

3.6 Reliability and Validity of the Data Gathering Tools

The researcher first distributed the questionnaires 2 weeks before the actual distribution date to pre-test if the questions were understood by the respondents and for reliability. The pre-testing was done in the library as students came for research. Twenty-five pre-tested questionnaires for students were responded to and indicated that the questions were not difficult to answer. Oladokun (2002) highlights that pre-testing is quite important as it helps to clarify some questions and provides a preview of the kind of answers one can expect.

The data gathering instruments gave the degree of consistency, dependability and accuracy, as they gathered the much needed data to complete the study. Even though Grinnell (1981) has the view that there is no instrument which is ever perfectly reliable, data gathered by these instruments were dependable as it was relatively free from gross errors. However, the researcher did not rule out the degree of error in these instruments as they are not hundred percent reliable.

3.7 Data Presentation and Analysis Procedures

The researcher did everything to make sure that analysis relied on the relevant evidence, included all major rival interpretations and addressed the most aspects of the study. Collected
data was presented in tables and pie-charts. The researcher also brought own current thinking and debate about the best practices in the provision of library and information services to distance learners. Yin (1994) posits that data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating or recombining the evidence to address the initial propositions of the study.

**Summary**

This chapter discussed the research methodology and research design used in the study. The mixed-methods research design was chosen as a preferred method as it scaled down and reduced some of the problems associated with singular methods. The study used questionnaires and interviews and the population was drawn from the students, the librarians, the administrator, the tutors and the regional director in the Mashonaland Central Regional Office of the Zimbabwe Open University. The next chapter looks at the data presentation, analysis and interpretation.
4.1 Introduction
In chapter three, the research methodology and design were explained, and the choice of questionnaires and interviews as research tools were articulated. This chapter provided an analysis and interpretation of the responses to the questionnaires administered to the students, course coordinators and interviews with the library staff and the regional director.

4.2 Responses from the students’ questionnaires
Of the 80 questionnaires administered, 55 were responded to, giving a 69% response rate. However, 25 (31%) were not returned and this was attributed to the fact that students were attending tutorials and some could not respond to the questionnaires and promised to complete at their free time, but did not return the questionnaires. The researcher made frantic effort for the return of the questionnaires after tutorials, but because of the scattered nature of these students it was difficult for him to reach out to these respondents as it was also difficult to ascertain who had responded and who had not responded. A notice statement to return the questionnaires was put at the Library, but nothing was returned.

4.2.1 Personal information of distance education students
Questions 1-5 of the questionnaire asked the respondents about their age groups, gender, and year of enrolment, employment status and where they live. This was meant to help the researcher to determine the characteristics of distance education students. The questionnaire asked them to
tick their age groups. Of the 55 respondents, 25 (45%) were in the range of 36-45 years, while 20 (36%) were in the range of 20-35 years and 10 (18%) were in the range of 46 years and above. The respondents were also asked to indicate their gender and 35 (64%) were males, while 20 (36%) were females. The questionnaire also asked them to state the year they were enrolled in as distance education students and responded in this way, 15 (27%) enrolled in 2010, while 30 (55%) enrolled in 2011 and 10 (18%) enrolled in 2012. The questionnaire also asked them to indicate their employment status and 55 (100%) was employed. The respondents were also asked to state where they lived and 38 (69%) lived in town, while 17 (31%) lived in the villages. The results indicated that distance education students were adults, and were employed.

4.2.2 **Library and information services provided by the regional library**

Respondents were asked to indicate whether the library and information services provided by the regional library were meeting their needs in course assignments and examination preparations. Of the 55 respondents, 5 (9%) indicated yes, while 45 (82%) indicated no and 5 (9%) indicated partially.

4.2.3 **Frequency of visit to the regional library**

An attempt was made to obtain information on how often students visited the regional library in the course of their studies. The results are shown in Figure 4.1.
Figure 4.1: Frequency of visit to the regional library

Figure 4.1 shows the frequency visit of the regional library by the respondents. It indicates that 16 (29%) visited the regional library once a week, 5 (9%) visited the library twice a week and the highest percentage of the respondents 20 (36%) visited the regional library once a month, while 8 (15%) visited the library twice a month, 4 (7%) visited the library daily and 2 (4%) of the respondents never visited the regional library.

4.2.4 Reasons for using the regional library

Respondents were asked to indicate the reasons for using the regional library. The results are reported in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Reasons for using the Mashonaland Central regional library
From the results presented in Table 4.1 it is inferred that the respondents used the regional library for the following reasons: 53 (96%) respondents use the regional library for assignment writing. 39 (71%) respondents use the regional library for examination preparations. Also 12 (22%) respondents use the regional library for internet services. 30 (55%) respondents use the regional library for reading textbooks covering their courses. Of the 55 respondents, 15 (27%) respondents use the regional library for research purposes, while 38 (69%) respondents visit the regional library to borrow books for use at home. However, no respondents ticked on photocopying services.

4.2.5 Constraints to the use of the regional library

Respondents were asked to indicate the constraints that hindered them from using the regional library. Table 4.2 indicated how they responded.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not aware</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. opening and closing times not flexible</td>
<td>16 (29%)</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>8 (15%)</td>
<td>10 (18%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. physical distance to the library</td>
<td>17 (31%)</td>
<td>8 (15%)</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>4 (7%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. time factor as I am employed</td>
<td>4 (7%)</td>
<td>25 (45%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. not aware of what the library offers</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16 (29%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. not interested in using the library</td>
<td>5 (9%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>30 (54%)</td>
<td>12 (22%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. inadequate materials for my programme</td>
<td>26 (47%)</td>
<td>15 (27%)</td>
<td>7 (13%)</td>
<td>7 (13%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. no computers and internet services</td>
<td>50(91%)</td>
<td>5 (9%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. no photocopying services</td>
<td>45 (82%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. borrowing services inflexible</td>
<td>20 (36%)</td>
<td>15 (27%)</td>
<td>10 (18%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the results presented in Table 4.2, 16 (29%) strongly agreed that opening and closing times are inflexible, 2 (4%) agreed, 8 (15%) strongly disagreed and 10 (18%) disagreed. 17 (31%) of the respondents strongly agreed that physical distance to the library was a constraint, 8 (15%) agreed, 2 (4%) strongly disagreed and 4 (7%) disagreed. 45 (82%) of the respondents strongly agreed that there are no photocopying services. 50 (91%) of the respondents strongly agreed that lack of computers and internet services were hindering them from using the library. Some respondents left the boxes blank and could not be analysed and presented.
4.2.6 Currency of the books in the library

Respondents were asked to rate the currency of the books in the library. Thirty-five (64%) of the respondents indicated that the books were outdated while 20 (36%) indicated that the books were current.

4.2.7 The extent to which the regional library is fostering high academic quality

Table 4.3 indicated how the respondents rated the extent in which the library is fostering high academic quality.

Table 4.3: How the regional library is fostering high academic quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not aware</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. extending borrowing privileges to distance students</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50 (91%)</td>
<td>5 (9%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. deliver library services to students wherever they are located</td>
<td></td>
<td>55 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. extending opening hours for students</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4 (7%)</td>
<td>49 (89%)</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. collaborating with other libraries where students are referred to</td>
<td>45 (82%)</td>
<td>10 (18%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. provide conducive environment for students</td>
<td>20 (36%)</td>
<td>15 (27%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the results presented on Table 4.3, all the respondents strongly disagreed that the library is delivering library services to distance education students wherever they are, 50 (91%) also strong
disagreed that the library is extending opening hours for students, 45 (82%) and 10 (18%) strongly agreed and agreed respectively on the collaboration of the library with other libraries where students are also being referred to. Some boxes were left blank and could not be analysed and presented.

4.2.8 Other aspects pertinent to the study

The students were asked if there were any further aspects not mentioned in the questionnaire that they considered pertinent to the study or they would like to bring to the attention of the researcher. In responses to question 14, the respondents suggested that Internet services should be made available quickly to help students’ access current information. Some proposed the introduction of electronic borrowing facility as card pockets could get lost easily. Majority of the respondents assert that the library space is too small to accommodate more students and urged the authorities to urgently address the issue of study space in the library. They also suggested that the library would extend working hours to 10pm to accommodate students who are employed and give them opportunity to use the library in the evenings.

4.3 Responses from programme coordinators/tutors

Questionnaires Distributed = 15  
Questionnaires Returned = 12  
Percentage of questionnaire returned = 80%  
Percentage of questionnaire not returned = 20%

4.3.1 Types of course materials given to distance education students

The respondents described modules, course outlines, tutorial letters and assignment topic sheets as course materials given to distance education students. The respondents also indicated that
these tutorial materials were not sufficient enough and distance education students need to use the library for further epistemological data.

4.3.2 Constraints to the use of library by distance education students

The respondents were asked what they thought were the constraints to the use of library services by distance education students. They cited distance from the library, transport costs to and from the library, borrowing period, closing times of the library, and limited books for specific courses as constraints to the use of the library. The respondents all agreed that distance education students occasionally use the library for academic work. When asked to express any further aspects regarding the provision of adequate library and information services to distance education students, the respondents indicated that the library must be decentralized to district centres to enable students from these areas to access library services and resources in close proximity.

4.4 Interviews with the Regional Director’ office

Interviews with a staffer in the regional director revealed that ZOU has a decentralization policy on the provision of library and information services to its students. The regional centre had since opened two more satellite libraries in Mt. Darwin and Guruve areas to cater for students who live in the remotest areas of Mukumbura, Kanyemba and Mbire. Apart from the decentralisation process, efforts have been made to establish a bigger library at the regional centre, but had been negatively impacted on financial resources as most buildings are charging commercial rates. The staffer also revealed that the regional library has received computers to establish a computer laboratory for students to access online resources. Currently, as the researcher observed, the
library had only one Internet port accessible to students who brought in their laptops to the library.

4.5 Interviews with the library staff

The first question put to the librarians asked them the library and information services they provide to distance education students. The respondents highlighted that they provided reader services, lending services, reference and information services, and referral services. The library staff was also asked if the services they provided were adequate enough to enable students in assignment and examination preparations. They indicated that the students need to have a wide and in-depth knowledge of concepts and skills of their study areas through the use of the library. They further explained that in the library, students would consult other sources and authorities not indicated in their modules, thereby enhancing their educational endeavours.

The library staff were also asked what they thought were the constraints to the use of library by distance education students. They pointed out that students who live away from the regional library were affected by distance and time to get to the library as they need to travel long distance of hundred to hundred and fifty kilometres. They also revealed shortage of seating space and inadequate collection in some courses as hindrances to the use of library and information services at the regional library. The library is currently housed within the main building which also has offices of other members of staff and has a seating capacity of sixteen students at a time. The library staff also revealed that new programmes introduced such as records and archives management, library and information science among other courses have no books in the library and students on such programmes are cut off the library and do not use it.

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The library staff also revealed that the loan period of seven days was also another hindrance as distance education students from rural areas were not able to borrow books, as they would fail to return them on time due to distance and time. This, according to the library staff has also been aggravated by the fact that the library does not offer photocopying services to students; therefore students can not photocopy pieces of information from the library.

4.6 Discussion

The study revealed that there were more male students than female students who attended tutorials on this particular day where questionnaires were distributed as indicated by 64% of the respondents. Another significant finding was on the age distribution, where the majority was between 20 and 45 years. This implies that distance education students were adult students. This also support Calvert’s (2000) assertion that students enrolled in distance education are generally older, working adults with limited time to devote to the library research. The study also revealed that library and information services provided to distance education students were not adequate to meet the students’ needs in assignment writing and examination preparations as indicated by 82% of the respondents. The study also revealed that not all students made use of the library and information services as indicated by the variances in the frequency of visit to the regional library. This finding support Mabawonku’s (2004) position that some distance education students could graduate without having used the library due to the fact that they may not have been oriented to library and information services when enrolled. Hansen (2000) also had the view that distance education students when not provided with library and information services can do without important library materials.
Of interest, the study revealed that lack of computers and Internet services were the major constraints that hindered the students from using the library. This had been indicated by 91% of the respondents. However, of major concern also revealed by the study was that the regional library was not addressing issues of high academic quality as indicated in Table 4.3. The overall findings were that library and information services are critical to the successfullness of distance education students. This had been revealed by the fact that ZOU was decentralising its library services to cater for students who live in far away areas. The institution had recently opened satellite libraries to cater for students in remote areas and had also received computers to establish a computer laboratory for students to access online resources.

**Summary**

The results of the study revealed that distance education students were not making full use of the library and information services and resources offered by the regional library were not meeting their information needs in assignment writing and examination preparations. What emerged from the findings were that lack of computers and Internet services were hindering students from using the library. However, the study also revealed that ZOU had opened satellite libraries to cater for students who lived far away areas.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In chapter four, data presentation, analysis and interpretations were conducted. This chapter summed up the research study by giving summary, conclusion and recommendations in a bid to bring together the trends that have emerged from the study.

5.2 Summary

The main purpose of the study was to examine the library and information services provided to distance education students at the ZOU Mashonaland Central Regional Library in Bindura using the ACRL guidelines on the provision of library and information services to distance education students as evaluation framework. The study attempted to find out whether the library and information services provided were meeting the students’ needs in fulfilling course assignments and examination preparations, and whether there was room for improvement in the library and information services rendered, and to suggest and offer recommendations for better services. In pursuance of this, some objectives were formulated and the background information and the statement of the research problem were provided as indicated in chapter one. A review of related literature was undertaken and a mixed-methods research design was used as a suitable methodology as it provided the opportunity to gather both quantitative and qualitative data to address the research problem. Structured and unstructured questionnaires and interviews were also used as tools or instruments of data collection procedures. However, the study revealed that distance education students were not making full use of the library and information services.
5.3 Conclusions

As it was noted in chapter four, that there were many perspectives from which problems faced by distance education students could be perceived. The study discovered that the library and information services provided were not meeting the distance education students’ needs in fulfilling course assignments and preparation of examinations. The study also highlighted some constraints to the full utilisation of library and information services by distance education students as noted in the pattern of responses. The study also underscored the view that even though distance education students were given modules and other tutorial packages, they still needed library and information services to supplement their studies. The study concluded that distance education students needed computers and Internet services for research in their areas of study.

The study also found that the library did not offer extended opening hours for students and that the loan period for books was seven days regardless of where the students live. This scenario had refrained students living far away from borrowing books from the library, as they could not afford frequent transport costs to return books on stipulated periods. Consequently, the students ended up regurgitating what would have been read from the course modules in both assignment writings and examination preparations. According to Mozes (2001) access to library and information services must be the core business of any academic library, and this becomes an integral part of the educational experience of distance education students. These findings however encourage the authorities to put in place mechanisms that would holistically address the need to ensure adequate infrastructures for library and information services to meet the information needs of distance education students.
5.4 Recommendations

The study attempted to provide recommendations based on the findings of the entire study. The study revealed that the Zimbabwe Open University Mashonaland Central Regional Library has a lot to do in order to serve the distance education students better. As Bockett…et al (1997) illustrate that students need additional reading materials to supplement the provided modules, therefore, in this context, the following recommendations were offered for consideration:

- The regional library should provide adequate library and information services to distance education students to meet their information needs to fulfill coursework assignments and examination preparations. In order to serve its clients better, it may subsequently enter into consortia agreements with other libraries within its jurisdiction and commit itself to provide ready access to materials and services that are pertinent to the programmes being offered by the university. Watson (1999) also opines that it is important for academic libraries responsible for the provision of library and information services to distance education students to collaborate with other libraries as they can not provide quality library and information services without others’ assistance.

- The library may consider students’ point of view and extend borrowing period for students living far away from the library. Kamau (1997) also support that students who are unable to visit the library easily need an extended borrowing period and Calvert (2000) also points out that academic libraries have the opportunity to
provide services as long as they are willing to meet the students’ demands for flexibility and convenience. Extending borrowing services help students living far away to borrow books to study home. The regional library may also provide more current books and latest journals. However, for these services to bear fruits it is also critical for ZOU to consider networking of its regional libraries, so that shareability of information is made possible.

- The regional library may also provide computers and internet services to enable students undertake online researches and expand the use of information communication technologies. According to Nduka (2011) technology served to reduce the barriers to library and information services that distance education students experience. Adams and Cassner (2000) also support the idea that electronic technology enhances distance education students’ success.

- The regional library may also provide photocopying services to enable students make copies from the library of essential information, such as examination papers for revisions. However, in this regard, the students are also to observe copyright regulations while the library supplies either a selection of books or articles or bibliography from which the students can select. The library may order copies of all books recommended in the modules or undertake inter-library loan services with other libraries to enable students have the required information for their courses.

- The regional library may adopt the ACRL’s guidelines on the provision of library and information services to distance education students. The guidelines contend
that the parent institution is responsible for ensuring that its distance education students have access to appropriate library resources.
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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Godfrey Tsvuura and I am a Master of Science in Library and Information Science student at the National University of Science and Technology. I am undertaking a research project entitled Library and information services provided to distance education students in Zimbabwe: The case of Zimbabwe Open University Mashonaland Central regional library. I am kindly requesting you to spare the shortest possible time of your busy schedule to answer this questionnaire. The information you are to provide is going to be treated confidential and is only to be used for the purpose of this research. Thank you for sparing your time to answer this questionnaire.

SECTION A

1. Tick in the space provided your age group

   20-35 [  ] 36-45 [  ] 46 and above [  ] Others specify……………………………………

2. Indicate your gender in the box provided

   Male

   Female

3. State the year you enrolled as a distance student.

4. Indicate whether employed or not employed
5. Tick whether you live in town, city or village

Town [ ] City [ ] Village [ ]

SECTION B

7. Are the library and information services provided by the regional library meeting your needs in fulfilling course assignments and examination preparations?

Yes [ ] No [ ] Partially [ ] Others specify

………………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………………

8. How often do you use the regional library?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Once a week</th>
<th>Twice a week</th>
<th>Once a month</th>
<th>Twice a month</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often do you use the library?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Tick in the table below your reasons for using the regional library. You can tick more than one aspect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. assignment writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. reading and preparing for examinations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. to use internet services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. for research purposes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. for photocopying services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. to read textbooks covering my course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. to borrow books for use at home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. Indicate the constraints that hinder you from using the library services and resources at the regional library. You can choose more than one aspect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not aware</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. opening and closing times not flexible</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. physical distance to the library</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. time factor as I am employed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. not aware of what the library offers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. not interested in using the library</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. inadequate materials for my programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. no computers and internet services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. no photocopying services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. borrowing services inflexible</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. How would you rate the currency of the books in the library?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recent books</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outdated books</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. Indicate the extent in which the library is addressing high academic quality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not aware</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. extending borrowing privileges to distance students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. deliver library services to students wherever they are located</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. extending opening hours for students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. collaborating with other libraries where students are referred to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. provide conducive environment for students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. Have you received training on how to access library resources at the regional library?
   Yes [  ] No [  ] If the answer is Yes, please specify the type of training.
   ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

14. Please use the space provided below to suggest any views and proposals you think the library should do to improve its services to distance learning students. You can use additional materials if the space provided is not enough.
   ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you very much for taking for time in completing the questionnaire. May the Almighty God bless you!
APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LIBRARIANS

1. What library and information services are you providing to distance education students?

2. Do you think the services are adequate enough to assist students in assignment and examination preparations?

3. In your views, what do you think are the constraints to the use of library by distance education students?

4. What is the library doing to address high academic quality?

5. What technologies and technological skills are you providing to distance education students?

Thank You.