An Examination of the Value that Librarians bring to the Legal Services Environment in Ireland and the United Kingdom
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Abstract

This research is an exploration of how law librarians are perceived. Both law librarians and legal professionals in Ireland and the United Kingdom were surveyed in relation to their perceptions of law librarians. The survey was by way of semi-structured questionnaires and the questions focussed on the value that these two groups believed law librarians add to their organisations. Overall the findings are that legal professionals do value the work of law librarians, but do not understand the specialised nature of their work and skills and do not consider them to be professionals. Law librarians value their own contribution to their organisations, but are aware that legal professionals have misconceptions about their role.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

The purpose of this research is to explore the perceptions that exist in relation to law librarians. The research explores (1) how law librarians are perceived by legal professionals and (2) how law librarians believe they are perceived by legal professionals. Specifically the research explores the value of law librarians, from the perspective of legal professionals and from law librarians.

The topic is of interest to the researcher as someone who is employed in a law firm and is pursuing a career as a librarian. The topic is relevant in 2014 because libraries and librarians need to be able to prove their relevance when faced with the question of why we need libraries or why librarians are still relevant in this technological age. There is currently a gap in the literature in relation to the value of law librarians that this research will fill. The topic is worth exploring because this research will add to the literature in this area and will enhance the current findings. This research examines the perceptions of law librarians in Ireland and in the United Kingdom by way of surveying both law librarians and legal professionals in 2014.

This research explores two distinct hypotheses. It was felt that it would be too narrow to look solely at the perceptions that legal professionals have of law librarians. The research aims to juxtapose these findings with the findings in relation to perceptions of law librarians. The hypotheses are:

Hypothesis 1:
Legal professionals do not value the contribution of law librarians to their organisations.

**Hypothesis 2:**

*Law librarians believe that legal professionals do not value the contribution of law librarians to their organisations.*

**Aims and Objectives**

The aim of this research is to collect data about the perceptions of law librarians from both legal professionals and law librarians and to use that data to produce statistics that can be analysed.

The objectives of this research will allow the researcher to meet the aim of the research. The objectives identified are:

1. To determine what perceptions legal professionals have about law librarians;
2. To determine the self-perception of law librarians;
3. To identify any differences in perceptions between legal professionals and law librarians in relation to the work of law librarians;
4. To identify what value law librarians believe they add to their organisations;
5. To ascertain whether or not the value of law librarians is recognised by legal professionals;
6. To ascertain whether or not legal professionals believe law librarians to be professionals;
7. To ascertain whether or not ‘digital natives’ have different perceptions of law librarians to ‘digital immigrants’.
In relation to these objectives and for the purpose of this research, digital natives are defined as those born after 1985.

The objectives of the research will be achieved by way of surveying both legal professionals and law librarians. Two separate questionnaires will be designed and distributed to potential participants by way of email. The questionnaires will be designed in a semi-structured format, consisting mainly of closed questions, but with some open questions. The questions will reflect the overall aim and objectives of this dissertation, as set out above. The findings will then be analysed with reference to those objectives.

Chapter 2 of this dissertation is a review of all relevant literature in this area. This chapter gives a sense of what is already known on this topic and what gaps exist in the literature that this research can fill. Research questions are set out, which are determined by the literature review.

Chapter 3 of this dissertation sets out the methodology and methods that will be employed in conducting this research. The reasons for selecting certain methods over others are explored and justified.

Chapter 4 sets out an analysis of the findings from the data collected by the surveys. The findings from the closed and open questions are analysed separately, but all findings are analysed with reference to the stated objectives of this dissertation. Themes that emerge from the findings of the open questions are analysed.
Chapter 5 is a discussion of the findings in relation to how these findings support or contradict the findings of the literature review. The findings are discussed with reference to the research questions that emerged from the literature review.

The scope of this research is limited to law librarians. It was deemed that it would have been too broad a scope to include librarians generally, so the scope was narrowed to a specialised group of librarians. The scope is limited to Ireland and the United Kingdom. Ireland has a limited number of law librarians working in law firms. This dissertation aims to explore the perceptions legal professionals have of law librarians and it was determined that it would be necessary to widen the scope to include the United Kingdom in order to have a richer sample of law librarians. This decision also allowed for the scope of legal professionals to be widened to include those from the United Kingdom.

The major contribution this study can add to the existing literature on this topic is that by identifying the perceptions that legal professionals have of them, it may be possible to explore ways to change those perceptions.


Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Having decided on a topic, a literature review was conducted in order to have an understanding of current findings in the area. This consisted of reading existing literature in the area and critically reviewing and comparing the current findings. This enabled the researcher to ascertain what is already known in the area of the value law librarians. More vitally, knowledge was gained about what was not known in this area and hence what gaps existed that were worthwhile exploring. This literature review provides a link to what it is proposed that this research will examine and what has already been examined in this area.

Insights into how the data was collected for the existing studies in this area were also gained, which enabled the researcher to choose a suitable methodology for this research.

The researcher began by reading extensively on the topic of librarians generally in order to allow certain themes to emerge from the literature. Locating the literature was done by way of reading general academic journals and library-specific journals. Much of what was read is not included in the literature review, particularly when it did not fit in with the themes that emerged from the majority of the literature. These themes became the basis for the theoretical framework of this research. In particular, the themes that are selected below were those selected to construct the theoretical framework.

Perceptions of librarians
The first theme to emerge from a reading of the literature was the theme of the image or perceptions of librarians. The problem that librarians have with their image is certainly not a new one within the profession. Librarians have traditionally and consistently been portrayed by all forms of media in a stereotypical fashion as being female, and displaying characteristics such as shy and mousey. Indeed Brobovitz and Griebel cite Melvil Dewey’s assertion as far back as 1876 that “the days of the librarian as a mouser in musty books must pass” (2001, p.260). For their study on this theme, they surveyed both library professionals and members of the public (by way of street survey, children’s art and survey of community leaders) in order to ascertain what impact, if any, the advance of technology had on the negative stereotype of librarians (2001, p.260). The results showed that the stereotype of the librarian still pervaded amongst members of the public and that librarians considered themselves to be underpaid and undervalued. The vast majority of librarians (86%) stated their opinion that the “image of the profession needed to be enhanced.” (2002, p. 262). Their study focussed on librarians generally, rather than specialist librarians, such as law librarians, which is an identifiable gap that this research can fill. It was also conducted in Canada so there is a contextual gap that this research can fill by conducting research in Ireland and the UK.

Radford and Radford (2003, p. 55) adopted a cultured studies approach to analyse how librarians are portrayed. Specifically, they examined the film Party Girl from a cultural perspective, with their focus on the two different types of librarian the film depicted. They found that from a cultural perspective, the film took one stereotype (that of the party girl) and transformed the main character into another stereotype as she became a librarian. The findings of this research demonstrate that the stereotype of a librarian is one that is used to contrast against the stereotype of a librarian as they are deemed to be opposite ends of a
spectrum. However, this research focuses solely on the portrayal of librarians in one film, so the findings cannot be generalised to how librarians are portrayed in films.

Williamson (2002, p. 47) examined the actual and perceived personality types of librarians. This was done by comparing the results of a study of librarians’ personality types with the personality types depicted by librarians in films, adopting the Jung/Myers-Briggs method. The results of this study were mixed and concluded that “filmmakers reinforce positive and negative stereotypes and sex roles in their depiction of librarians’ personality types.” (p. 54). This study appears to contradict the findings of Brobovitz and Griebel in that the image of librarians is not wholly negative. However, despite the positive images depicted in film, the actual personality types of librarians were either underrepresented or overrepresented in film so the depiction is not an accurate one. This study adopted a wholly quantitative approach and this researcher proposes to address that gap by using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methodology.

The depiction of librarians on a more modern medium than film, YouTube, has also been examined by Poulin (2008, p.4). It is interesting to note that on the videos that feature librarians (excluding any uploaded by librarians or excerpts from films), the portrayal of librarians contradicts the image of the homely, shy, glasses-wearing librarian. This study contradicts much of the literature as it finds that male librarians are portrayed as “social misfits, power-trippers, and psychos” (2008, p.5) and female librarians only feature as sexual objects (2008, p.6). The weakness of this study is that the nature of YouTube (videos are constantly being removed as well as uploaded) meant that it was only relevant for one month in 2008 and the content has most likely changed significantly since then so the results cannot be generalised.
A study was carried out by Dilevko and Gottlieb whereby obituaries of librarians in the New York Times were examined in order to ascertain if there were common themes in how they were perceived. The results of this study are noteworthy as they appear to contradict the negative stereotype as they found positive portrayals of librarians. The librarians are described as being “sleuths and detectives.” (2004, p. 152). Their study, however, as acknowledged by them, is not necessarily a genuine reflection of the perceptions of librarians. This is due to the selection nature of whose obituaries the New York Times choose to print. A disproportionately high number of the obituaries for librarians were for male librarians, which does not reflect the reality that the profession has historically been female-dominated. Additionally, the vast majority of the obituaries were for academic librarians, when in reality academic librarians are a small subset of librarians. This is another reason why the results of this study of perceptions of librarians are flawed and no conclusion should be drawn from the positive way in which librarians are portrayed. It also exposes a gap in methodology as quantitative methodology was used to gather the data and this researcher proposes to use a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methodology in order to enhance the richness of the findings.

Image of Libraries

The image of libraries in popular culture has been one of a place of books and of silence. However, it is clear from a reading of the literature that when people now think of libraries, they think of the word "obsolete" and this is the prevailing image of libraries. Heath (2009, p. 519) explored the issue of how librarians can stay relevant in the face of disruptive technologies and how they can thus improve their image. He examined other professions that
had also been threatened by technology, namely newspapers, the music industry, the book
publishing industry and higher education. The strength of this article is that it identifies the
"survival strategy" (2009, p. 521) of those industries in order to ascertain how the library
profession can learn from them. Heath arrives at the conclusion that libraries need to embrace
and keep up-to-date with new technologies in order remain relevant as information
professionals.

Rogers (2009, p. 546) believes that the reason libraries have an image of being irrelevant is
due to the fact that they "value process more than progress". This article is written from the
perspective of how academic libraries can stay relevant, but it is possible that other types of
libraries could implement similar strategies to those stated by Rogers. The steps that he lists
necessary for libraries to take are to embrace new technologies, use the economic downturn
to their advantage and begin to think like entrepreneurs (2009, p. 555), which are relevant to
most types of libraries.

Jennings (2013, p. 107) states that there are three main ways in which academic libraries can
show their relevance when confronted with the position that they are no longer relevant.
These are collectively known as the “three Es” (2013, p. 108) and are to engage, educate and
empower users. The arguments presented in this paper are clear and strong. The notion that to
stay relevant we must become an ally of our users and impress upon them what skills we
have is a strong and achievable aim that this researcher believes would improve the image of
libraries. However, this papers looks only at academic libraries so it may not be possible to
generalise the results to public and other libraries.
There appears to be consensus in the literature on this theme that there is an image problem with libraries. The only contradictions that exist relate to how libraries can overcome their image problem. This researcher will use these findings to ask questions about how law librarians are perceived, as the image of the library is inextricably linked to that of the librarian.

**Skills/Values of Librarians**

Whilst library professionals are aware of their own skills and expertise, it does not seem to be the case that their skills are acknowledged by those outside of the profession. Hewe (2004, p. 39) makes the case that the skills that librarians have should not actually be threatened by Google and the information age. Librarians still do the same work by using the same skillsets they always possessed, but they now do it using different types of media. The conclusion is that librarians need to remain organic as their referencing skills will always be superior to those of any technology (due to the human interaction they can have with users of their service), but they must ensure that they can articulate their skills to stakeholders.

Harris (2011, p. 28) tackles the issue of the school librarian being perceived as irrelevant in the age of the internet. The article makes a very compelling argument that the skillset of the school librarian are in fact more relevant than ever before. Incidents of students ordering books in the wrong language, only to realise what they have done when they arrive at the library to collect the books, are cited to demonstrate the impact that the librarian has when they have contact with the student. The school librarians’ skills are essential to students due to their abilities to find and, more importantly, evaluate online sources. Harris states that the strategy that should be adopted by school librarians is to acknowledge that students will use
unreliable sources to search for information and equip them with the skills to evaluate what they find. This supports the opinion of Hewe in terms of theorising that librarians should embrace, rather than be threatened by, the information age.

A study of the technology skills of academic librarians by Riley-Huff and Rholes (2011, p. 129) surveyed library administrators and librarians to ascertain how they acquired their skills. Their results identified a need for more advanced level technology courses. The results of their study also identified a need for more structure and less variation in what different LIS programs offer in terms of technology courses. This supports both Hewe and Harris in asserting that technology is the most important skill that librarians must equip themselves with.

Ballew (2014) discusses the value that the skills of librarians can contribute to the school environment. This paper states that it is important to bear in mind what the users of schools libraries in 2014 want and how librarians can utilise their skills to achieve this. The paper identifies that changes in amount and types of media that students are now presented with necessitates that they must be educated in terms of the style of writing that is suitable in schools, which differs greatly from the modern text and twitter style of writing. The article emphasises the "tremendous impact that actual dialogue has on authentic learning." (2014, p. 68). This article differs from the previous sources in that it highlights the importance of contact with users of the library service as an essential value of the librarian.

This researcher agrees with Harris (2011) that it is the job of the librarian to use their skills to educate people about how to find information, but that they must also accept that there are new ways of doing so and, rather than fighting this, librarians must prove their worth as
information professionals. Based on the literature reviewed, this researcher included a question asking legal professionals if they were aware of the law librarians’ skills and also a question to law librarians asking how aware the users of the library were of their skills.

**Value of Libraries**

The value of a library can exist in what it stocks or what impact it has on an organisation. Wilson and Tenopir (2008) conducted a study in the University of New South Wales which attempted to gauge the value of the research collection of its academic library by its users. The research was carried out by means of collecting and analysing data that detailed how academics use the library’s collection of journals, as well as by way of citation analysis. The results of this survey proved very positive from the perspective of the library. It demonstrated that this academic library holds an important and valued place within the institution. This research, however, is more focussed on the value users of the service place on the collection of libraries, rather than the contribution the library can make to an organisation generally. There is nothing in the findings to suggest that the users of the service associate that service with the library.

Tenopir (2010) considers return-on-investment (ROI) as a means to evaluate the e-journal collection of an academic library. Tenopir argues that it is necessary to show the financial value of a library due to the fact that the “cost of library collections and services increases over time, while the perceived value declines” (2010, p. 40). ROI is a tangible way to demonstrate the value of an e-journal collection to an academic institution and the findings are positive, with academic staff acknowledging the fact that they are more productive because of the e-journals that they can access through the library (2010, p. 39). The study shows that the academic value of a library can be calculated by reference to the grants that
will be received by the institution as a direct result of the money spent on the library service. These findings provide support for the previous Wilson and Tenopir (2008) in relation to the demonstrating that the library can be valued highly. However, the measurement used to demonstrate the value is different, as this study relates to showing the financial value of the library.

Frumkin and Reese (2011) propose that the academic library needs to increase its visibility in areas where it is not immediately apparent to the consumer of the information that the resource they are using has been provided to them by the library. One such suggestion is that the online collections be branded with the academic library's name or logo. This would then reinforce to the user that the technology they are using is a service that is only available to them because of the existence of the academic library. This would increase the value of the library in the mind of the user of such technology. It supports the findings of Wilson and Tenopir insofar as it asserts that users of academic libraries value the library. However, users of online databases do not necessarily associate the online sources with the library, which accounts for them not placing as high a value on online collections as they do on physical collections.

Oakleaf (2011) considered the value of academic libraries when faced with students who appeared to value speed and time over quality and also when faced with cuts to budgets where the library must justify its existence. This article states that it is vital for the future success of the academic library that they develop the capabilities to prove their worth. The library must communicate to its users that the library is the gateway to accessing online quality materials alongside proving the worth of having a physical collection. The proposition put forward was to launch a "Value of academic libraries initiative" (2011, p. 2). This
supports the previous findings of Frumkin and Reese in asserting that users will place a higher value on the library if they associate online collections with the library.

Williams and Edwards (2011) researched the value of public libraries across four Australian States. Their focus was on the role that the public library can play in the lives of young people in an environment where parental work impacts upon the educational interaction young people have with their parents. Their findings were that libraries offer a welcoming place for young people. They also found that they give them a sense of belonging within the community.

The literature on the theme of value of libraries converges on the concept that there is a link between visibility and image. The findings that there is a link between the visibility and value of the library prompted this researcher to include a question about the visibility of law libraries in the questionnaires.

**Digital Natives**

From reading the literature, a theme emerged relating to the fact that different groups of people have different information-seeking behaviour. Specifically, those who are too young to remember a world before the internet have different needs and behaviours to those who remember the world pre-internet. These people are variously referred to as the "Google generation" or "millenials". For the purpose of this research paper, they will be referred to as “digital natives”.


Anderson (2005) is critical of the manner in which the library profession was initially dismissive of search engines such as Google, comparing their “search results to fast food." (2005, p. 31). Anderson asserts that it is irrelevant to criticise Google in an attempt to show digital natives the value of the library. The paper articulates what Google does well that libraries do not, and concludes that the real problem identified is the reluctance of librarians to embrace technology (2005, p. 34). The article is highly critical of libraries and librarians. The paper states that the negative attitudes librarians have towards Google are irrelevant to how libraries will remain relevant in the information age. However, nothing is offered in order to counteract this.

The British Library and JISC (the Join Information System Committee, a UK-based body that supports education and research) commissioned a report into how digital natives will search for information in the future and how libraries can adapt to prepare for this. The findings were summarised in a report by Rowlands, et al. (2008). The way in which users searched for information was tracked by digital evidence and the results showed that "Users are promiscuous, diverse and volatile" (2008, p. 294). Specifically it stated that users skim results and quickly decide to leave pages if they don't immediately feel it has returned what they are looking for. Little time is devoted to analysing or verifying what they have found and their confidence in their own abilities to find accurate information is disproportionately high to their success rates. The study is concerned with whether or not this behaviour will continue as digital natives become immersed in the world of academia (2008, p. 296) based on their current behaviours. The conclusion is that it is not just digital natives that have changed how they seek behaviour and that the ubiquitous nature of Google entails that everybody is part of the Google generation. This report supports the findings of Anderson in asserting that librarians need to acknowledge that digital natives have different information-seeking
behaviour and librarians must adapt in order to provide the best possible service to these users.

Loertscher (2009) advocates a client-centred method of devising school programs in Canadian schools that will appeal to digital natives. The concept is that there would be an open space comprised of traditional and new features of library that appeal more to digital natives than the traditional library. This article acknowledges that changes need to be made in order to accommodate the needs of digital natives at an early age, which also supports the findings of Anderson.

Dickinson (2012) argues that school librarians in America need to adopt an attitude towards their digital natives that they will not only facilitate them in finding and appraising online information, but that they will seek the help of digital natives where appropriate. They must become involved with the world of the digital native and help them to make the best of the new tools that are at their disposal.

Griffin (2013) reports that young people in America are still likely to be found visiting physical libraries and that their preferred method of study is to combine the online experience with the physical experience. This article contradicts the findings of the others that digital natives do not value the library as a space.

The literature in this area recognises that it is important to acknowledge that digital natives have different information-seeking behaviours to non-digital natives (or digital immigrants). This researcher used these findings to include a question asking users of the library whether
or not they were digital natives in order to ascertain if they had different perceptions of law librarians to digital immigrants.

**Law Librarians**

There was another theme that emerged from the literature on the topic of law librarians. It appears from the literature that law librarians, perhaps more so than other specialist librarians, have felt the need to prove their worth.

In 1997 the American Association of Law Librarians held a conference with the main objective being to prove the worth of law librarians, as cited by Hinckley (1997, p.1). The conference was attended in record numbers, which highlights the interest in this topic and that law librarians have historically felt that their worth was not acknowledged. This paper states that law librarians need to improve their image and that the reason they are not given recognition for their contribution towards legal research is because they don’t demand it. The author states that the reason law librarians have been unsuccessful in improving their image within their firms is because they are “reluctant to promote themselves for fear of appearing unprofessional and egocentric.” (1997, p. 1).

The topic of how law school students felt about law librarianship as a career choice was explored by Mosley (1999, p. 232) who focussed solely on the perceptions of African-Americans in Florida. The students were surveyed about various statements relating to law librarianship and asked to rate on a scale how much they agreed with the statements. The results showed that the majority did not consider law librarianship to be a good or enjoyable career choice. Mosley concluded that the career of law librarianship is not being sold or
marketed properly and that perceptions of law librarianship must be challenged. This contradicts the findings of Hinckley that librarians are not valued in law firms because they don’t promote themselves. It suggests that the reason they are not valued is because legal professionals do not consider librarianship to be a worthwhile career.

The trend of law librarians feeling undervalued is also seen in relation to firms that request their law librarians to bill their hours. Carter (2004, p. 34) details a survey about the rates that law librarians were billing and the fact that the rates are perceived by law librarians to be too low and not an accurate reflection of their expertise. This study also exposes another issue law librarians have in terms of expressing their value to law firms. Unlike legal professionals, they do not bring in clients and thereby generate revenue. This provides another possible reason as to why law librarians do not feel valued, which is that they don’t generate revenue.

Whether or not librarians are satisfied in their jobs was addressed by a Canadian study conducted by Eva and McCormack (2009, p. 40). This was done by way of survey to members of the Canadian law library associations. The results are positive in that they found a majority of respondents were satisfied in their jobs. However, there were some discrepancies between the satisfaction rates of older respondents and younger respondents, with older respondents expressing higher levels of job satisfaction. This researcher used this finding to include a question to law librarians in the Ireland and the UK about how long they had been working in their organisations in order to ascertain if similar findings would emerge.

The economic downturn had a major impact on law librarians in the UK, as noted by Brown (2014, p. 176), whose research explored the topic of outsourcing of legal research by law
firms to legal research services. There is division between law librarians and outsourced legal researchers about what impact this has on the service that is being provided to the legal professionals. Interviews were conducted with a range of relevant parties, including providers and users of the outsourced services as well as law librarians. One of the reasons given for outsourcing the library included the desire to have access to “specialist research skills” (2014, p. 185).

There is no general consensus in the literature as to what value is placed on librarians, or why they are not valued more. This researcher used the findings in the literature on this theme to include a question about whether or not legal professionals view law librarians as researchers. Additionally, a question was asked about whether or not legal professionals and law librarians felt it would be beneficial for a law librarian to have studied law.

**Marketing of Libraries**

Libraries may not have traditionally felt the need to market themselves, as the public library had a unique position in communities as being a space that welcomed all members of the community. Also, libraries do not exist in order to make a profit, so the concept of marketing seems alien to librarians. The topic of whether or not librarians see the value of marketing was explored by Shontz, Parker and Parker (2004, p. 63) who surveyed public librarians in New Jersey in relation to their attitudes towards marketing libraries. Overall there was a positive result and public librarians acknowledged the benefits of marketing. This researcher used this finding to ask about the visibility of the library within law firms.
The concept of implementing a marketing plan for a university library in Nebraska was explored by Campbell and Gibson (2005, p. 153). The need for marketing had been noted by students who expressed their dissatisfaction at not being able to find resources on the internet, seemingly unaware of the databases they could access via the library (2005, p. 155). Several strategies were implemented to increase visibility of the library and the results were mixed. Academic departments were more aware of the library, but there was no increase of the amount of students who used the reference desk (2005, p. 163).

A university in Illinois attempted to use marketing in order to increase the number of students using its reference desk (2009, p. 109). This was done by the library in conjunction with marketing students, whereby the marketing students were given the responsibility of designing the survey in relation to student opinions about the library. The results of the survey were that, although students had a positive opinion about the library, they did not use the full resources of the library (2009, p. 113). The marketing students gave suggestions as to how the library could increase its visibility, to include more signing, instant messaging service and the implementation of walk-in library workshops. The findings of this study show that including users in attempting to market a library is more effective than when libraries attempt to market themselves.

Naikwadi and Chaskar (2012, p. 1) explored the topic of marketing in the context of an academic library. They cite the lack of business acumen of librarians as a reason why they have failed to successfully market themselves. They assert that the “7Ps” must be utilised as a marketing mix for libraries to market themselves and the 7ps are stated to be product, place, price, promotion, process, people and physical evidence. The promotion is clearly the most fundamental aspect of these 7Ps and the tools suggested to promote the library are the
internet, websites, portals, blogs, brochures, newsletters, seminars, information literacy programmes, awards and library services (2012, p. 6).

This researcher used the findings from the literature on this theme to include a question on how aware legal professionals were of the contribution of law librarians to their organisations and also to ask law librarians how aware they believed users were of their (i.e. law librarians) contribution to their organisations.

**Rebranding of Librarians**

The theme of rebranding also emerges from the literature. Scammell (2007) carried out research on the concept of individual rebranding in the political sphere. This research looked specifically at Tony Blair and acknowledged that individuals could have a brand:

“The term brand is everywhere now, applied not just to products, companies, organizations, and celebrities but also to cities, nations, and even private individuals.” (Scammell, 2007, p. 178)

The findings of this research were that if an individual can have a brand, it can therefore also be rebranded. These findings can be generalised and could be used by librarians to examine what their current brand is and if it should be rebranded.

Gall (2010) also conducted research in the area of personal branding and explored the topic of branding of librarians. This research focused specifically on distance librarians and how they can rebrand themselves in order to reach out to students. The author states that it is
imperative that distance users of the library service have a positive image of librarians as they are more difficult to convince of your worth. By promoting the librarian as a brand, the entire service of the library is also promoted. Gall lists several ways in which a personal brand can be created, to include doing what you’re good at and being good at what you do. One of the most interesting and effective techniques he lists is that he signs his emails ‘Dan the Librarian’. He asserts that the increase in students approaching him with queries in the last two years as evidence that this particular form of branding has had a positive effect.

Schneider (2012) discusses the concept of “evidence-based branding” of librarians and highlights the way in which a library graduate used this technique to create a brand that resulted in the graduate being offered employment in a relevant area. The author of the paper, however, warns that branding can be used to hide inadequacies and that it is not an essential component of being a librarian (2012, p. 37).

The results from this section of the literature review prompted this researcher to include questions on the profile of the library and librarian, from the perspective of both the legal professionals and the law librarians.

**Research Questions**

It is evident from the literature review conducted that there are contextual gaps in the research that has been done in this area. There is a paucity of research on the question of how law librarians are perceived by legal professionals and on the self-perception of law librarians generally, and there is none that focuses on Ireland and the UK. The researcher undertook this work with several research questions in mind:
What perceptions do legal professionals have about law librarians?

Do legal professionals value the work of law librarians?

What perceptions do law librarians have of themselves?

Do law librarians believe their work is valued by legal professionals?

What perceptions do law librarians believe legal professionals have of law librarians?

Do digital natives have a different perception of the library to digital immigrants?

Do librarians have high profiles in law firms?

Do libraries have high profiles in law firms?
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Having selected the topic and reviewed the literature in that area, the methodology to be employed was decided upon and the research plan formulated.

The fundamental research purpose of this study is to explore two hypotheses relating to the perceptions of law librarians in Ireland and the United Kingdom. It is evident from the literature review that there is currently no research that tests the hypothesis that law professionals do not value librarians or the hypothesis that law librarians do not feel valued by legal professionals. In order to explore this area, the researcher devised two separate questionnaires: one to gain an insight into whether or not legal professionals value librarians; and one to gain an insight into whether or not librarians believe they are valued by legal professionals. This chapter details the research methodology chosen to undertake this research and the reason why certain methods were chosen over others. It also assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the methods chosen in relation to the hypotheses.

Research Philosophy

It is necessary to set out the researcher’s philosophy in order to justify the chosen approach to undertake the research (Creswell, 2014, p. 6). Due to the nature of this research and the fact that it is conducted using mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative), this researcher believes the most appropriate philosophy to adhere to is pragmatism. The pragmatist philosophy is more flexible than other philosophies and, crucially for this research, “opens the door to multiple methods, different worldviews, and different assumptions, as well as
different forms of data collection and analysis.” (Creswell, 2014, p. 11). Other philosophies that could have been chosen include positivism, which is the philosophy that “the social sciences should endeavour to emulate the most advanced of the natural sciences” (Hughes and Sharrock, 1997, p. 24). It is the philosophy of observation and therefore not applicable to this research. The interpretative philosophy was also discounted (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009, p. 116) as it was deemed too restrictive for the purposes of this mixed method research. The interpretative philosophy entails the researcher approaching the research from the viewpoint that there are many diverse versions of reality depending on the viewpoint of the observer (Biggam, 2011 p.137). While this is relevant in the context of the open questions included on the survey and the fact that the data being collected is subjective, the flexibility of the pragmatism philosophy was deemed the most appropriate for the purposes of analysing data using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Research Approach

The research approach chosen for this study is mixed methods. “The mixed methods approach aims to best achieve the objectives of a study by combining the strengths of different methods and paradigms.” (Kumar, 2014, p. 20). This entails that the data collected will be both inductive and deductive. This triangulated approach is suitable because it compensates for any weaknesses of the choosing either qualitative or quantitative methods and also because it is the one that fits best with the philosophy of pragmatism. Quantitative research designs are more structured than qualitative and are subject to rigorous testing for validity and reliability (Kumar, 2014, p. 133). Qualitative research designs allow for the emergence of data and the subjectivism of the participants. This research will use a mixture of these two approaches in order to enhance the richness of the findings of the research. The open questions from the questionnaires will generate theory and will allow rich information
to be gathered. The closed questions will generate deductive information that can be measured. This approach also best meets the issues to be addressed by this research. There are two hypotheses that the research is attempting to explore and mixed methods allow for the collection of qualitative data that can be interpreted using a quantitative method (i.e. statistics). The impact that this mixed approach has on this research is that it allows for richer data to be collected and is the optimum approach to address the questions set out in the hypotheses.

**Research strategy**

The research strategy employed to collect the data was survey by way of two separate questionnaires (both of which are contained in Appendix A). In order to explore the issues set out in the two hypotheses, it was deemed necessary to gain data from both legal professionals and law librarians. The strategy of questionnaire was favoured over interview because of the potential for interview bias and also the fact that it was deemed that more honest answers would be given by way of self-administered, confidential, anonymous questionnaires. Additionally, one of the strengths of this strategy is that it is easy to approach potential participants via email and it does not impose on too much of their time.

The data from the open questions was analysed by way of thematic analysis. Coding was used in the analysis of the transcript. Thematic coding was used in the analysis of the transcript by way of coding for themes and will give rise to categories that emerge and from this, themes can be generated. The data from the closed questions will be recorded by measuring the responses and recording them in graphs and charts. The results will then be analysed with reference to the research questions detailed in the literature review chapter.
Time Horizons

The time horizon that I had initially devised is detailed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>Finish Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Searching for and reading secondary data</td>
<td>April 2014</td>
<td>May 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devising questionnaires</td>
<td>May 2014</td>
<td>June 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collecting primary data</td>
<td>June 2014</td>
<td>July 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysing primary data</td>
<td>July 2014</td>
<td>August 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing the early drafts</td>
<td>July 2014</td>
<td>August 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finalising and submitting thesis</td>
<td>August 2014</td>
<td>August 2014</td>
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However, due to personal circumstances, the researcher chose to defer submitting this dissertation in July 2014. By this stage, the primary data by way of completed questionnaires had been received, but the process of analysing this data had not commenced. The revised time horizon for completion of this research is below:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>Finish Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Searching for and reading secondary data</td>
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<td>June 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collecting primary data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysing primary data</td>
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<td>Writing the early drafts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finalising and submitting thesis</td>
<td>January 2015</td>
<td>January 2015</td>
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**Ethics**

The main ethical issue that arose for this researcher was that when designing the questionnaires it was essential to avoid leading questions as this would be unethical (Kumar, 2014, p. 188). Anonymity was guaranteed to all participants and was complied with. The covering email request participation in the research was clear and honest about how the data would be used. (Covering email is at Appendix B). Due to the fact that the participants were not in the ‘vulnerable’ category and the topic for the research was not sensitive, nothing further arose ethically. All participants consented to their data being used for the purposes of this research.

**Limitation**

The context is limited due to the fact that the sample chosen was only those who are members of the British and Irish Association of Law Librarians. The findings are limited to the questions on the questionnaires and there is limited scope for themes to emerge that have not been predetermined by the structure of the questionnaire.

**Researcher Bias**
The researcher bias exists in the subjectivism of the researcher. This bias impacts upon the questions that were chosen and the personal opinion that was held about the view legal professionals had of law librarians and the view law librarians had of themselves. This researcher attempted to minimise this bias by taking an objective view towards the topic when designing the questionnaire and choosing the questions. The research is, however, free from interviewer bias due to the fact that the questionnaires were self-administered.

Data Collection

**Designing the questionnaire**

The design process is crucial to the type of data that will be returned. A poorly written questionnaire will not return useful data and “good research cannot be built on poorly collected data” (Gillham, 2008, p. 11). The researcher determined (a) what this research is attempting to uncover; and (b) what questions could best address this. Based on this, a semi-structured questionnaire was devised in order to obtain the data from participants. The nature of semi-structured questionnaires is that they are comprised of both open and closed questions. The advantage of the closed questions is that they are easier to analyse and the data can be manipulated into statistics. However, there is so scope to uncover additional data outside the remit of the question. The advantage of the open question is that themes emerge organically.

The questionnaires were designed to be self-administered. They were emailed to the sample group who then had to respond without the researcher being present. The advantage to using self-administered questionnaires is that it avoids “prestige bias” (Dawson, 2006, p. 90). Prestige bias can occur where a participant feels under pressure to give an answer that they
believe reflects them better and therefore the data may not be entirely truthful. Overall there was little scope for potential prestige bias in this questionnaire, but it did ask a question about the highest qualification that people had attained and perhaps the self-administered nature of the questionnaire made participants more comfortable about answering such questions. There was also a question to legal professionals about whether or not librarians are professional or administration staff and it is possible that the answer to this particular question could have been influenced if it had been asked directly by a librarian.

The researcher is happy that the questionnaires were well designed, but notes that they do have some weaknesses. The first two questions on the questionnaire for the librarians are the open questions. This is a flaw of the design as it is possible that having to begin with an open question may have influenced some potential participants not to become involved in the survey. The design of the questionnaire for legal professionals does not contain this weakness and it begins with closed questions, with the two open questions appearing about halfway through the questionnaire. Participants are more likely to continue with a questionnaire once they have begun but in placing open questions at the start of one of the questionnaires, this researcher may have limited the number of responses from law librarians.

**Validity and reliability**

When assessing a questionnaire, the two most important issues to be mindful of are validity and reliability (Nardi, 2006, p.63). Validity can be determined by the response rate to the questionnaire (Gillham, 2008, p.48). There are an estimated 400 people on the BIALL mailing list. That mailing list includes students, unemployed people and retired people. Of the remaining number of law librarians, many work in institutions other than law firms such as
Government departments and universities. The questionnaires were designed for law librarians and legal professionals who work in law firms and therefore many of the people on this mailing list were not eligible for the study. In total 25 responses were received from law librarians and 20 from legal professionals. This reflects an estimated 10% response rate from law librarians. This was a disappointing response rate in the context of validity. However, there are other measures for validity and the response rate measurement is more relevant to the collection of quantitative data, whereas this research was collecting qualitative data. The purpose of this research was to explore two hypotheses and not to prove or test a theory. This researcher achieved validity through a process of operationalization. This process consisted of ensuring that the variables (i.e. the concepts behind the questions) could be measured in a way that would indicate what the question is supposed to indicate. For example, question 4 on the questionnaire for librarians is: “How challenging is your job”? The process of operationalization involves specifying what will be used to indicate the concepts. (Nardi, 2006, p. 50). In this example, the concept is ‘challenging’. Variables are used to measure the responses and operationalization is the process of selecting what values should be used. This researcher determined that the most valid variables to include as responses to this question are:

*Extremely challenging*

*Very challenging*

*Moderately challenging*

*Slightly challenging*

*Not at all challenging*
Validity for all the questions was achieved in the same manner as it was deemed that the measurements used will provide the information that this research is seeking. Reliability was achieved in both the writing of the questions and the interpreting of the data by way of interrater reliability (Nardi, 2006, p. 63), which ensured the questions were clear and the measures stable and consistent.

**Sampling**

Several versions of these questionnaires were drafted before they were deemed to contain relevant and appropriate questions that would elicit the information that would answer the research question and would do so in ways that were measurable. Initial drafts were amended based on personal instinct having re-read the questions and attempted to answer them. The questionnaires were then tested by a pilot group of selected librarian and legal professionals. From the feedback received, minor amendments were made to the surveys to include providing additional options on answers to closed questions and using greater clarity in the phrasing of certain questions. Once the questionnaires were deemed to have proper validity, they were distributed via the mailing list for the British and Irish Association of Law Librarians, with a cover email detailing the purpose of same and that all responses would be treated confidentially. A request was made of the librarians to distribute the questionnaire for legal professionals to their legal colleagues in order to access legal professionals from the United Kingdom as well as Ireland. The email was sent in June 2014, which is a weakness of this method as it coincides with a time when many people take holiday leave from work. Responses were initially very slow to return. This researcher also believes that it would have been beneficial if the email had not been sent by a third party, as perhaps the personal touch would have elicited a higher response rate. A second email was circulated approximately two
weeks after the first one to thank those who had participated and to inform those who had missed the opportunity to take part that there were a further two weeks available for them to complete the questionnaires. Fortunately, the response rate was much higher and interest in the topic was expressed by many who responded along with a request to be kept informed of the results of this research. A combination of sampling techniques was used for this research. By sending an email to BIA LL, a probability sample was used, as each member of this mailing list had an equal opportunity to partake in the survey (Dawson, C. 2006, p. 49). However, a convenience sample was later selected by this researcher in order to increase the number of legal professional participants in the survey and to have an equal amount of legal professionals and law librarians. The researcher had access to legal professionals through work and selected five people to fill out the survey. Having had a cursory glance at the responses from the legal professionals up to this point, it was apparent that more ‘digital immigrants’ than ‘digital natives’ had completed questionnaires, so the sample selected consisted only of digital natives.

**Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis**

This chapter presents the findings of the research and gives an analysis of the findings. Chapter 5 presents a more detailed discussion of the findings.

**Findings of closed questions**

The data from the closed questions was entered into SPSS, a computer programme designed to create statistics for the social sciences. Despite the fact that most of the questions are qualitative in nature, in that they are measuring the participants’ opinions and are not of a
scientific nature, it was determined that statistics would give overall clarity in relation to how
the respondents answered the questions. The programme also allows for the creation of
graphs, such as bar charts and pie charts, which provide a visual representation of what
answers occurred most frequently.

As discussed in Chapter 3, it was necessary when designing the questionnaire to undertake a
process of “operationalization” in order to determine what values would be applied to the
variables on the questionnaire. The type of graph necessary to represent each variable is
determined by this, as each variable will be measured according to an appropriate level of
measurement. The four types of measurement for variables are nominal, ordinal, interval and
ratio (Nardi, 2006, p.51). SPSS makes no distinction between interval and ratio, so in reality
this research had access to three levels of measurement in order to create statistics. Nominal
variables are “discrete measures whose values represent named categories of classification”
(Nardi, 2006, p. 52). This study used nominal measurement for any question for which the
possible responses were ‘Yes’, ‘No’, and ‘No opinion’. Ordinal variables are those where
there is a sequence in terms of the possible answers and this level of measurement was used
for all questions where there was a range of possible answers from ‘Extremely…’ to ‘Not at
all’. If the data being analysed was purely quantitative, then an interval measurement (or
scale as it is referred to in SPSS) would be the most appropriate level of measurement.
However, this researcher believed that it was necessary to bear in mind the qualitative nature
of the responses being created and concluded that ordinal was the most appropriate
measurement for these variables, as the answers depend on perceptions of respondents, rather
than scientific facts. The scale measurement was employed to analyse the data from the
questions that asked about time (e.g. ‘How long have you been employed…’, ‘How often to
you give training…, etc.).
Analysis of closed questions

This section sets out an analysis of the data, which was conducted in relation to the aims and objectives as set out in the literature review section. The aim of the dissertation was to collect data about the perceptions of law librarians amongst both legal professionals and law librarians and from that data to produce statistics that can be analysed. Each of the objectives will be set out below.

The open questions are analysed separately at the end of this chapter.
Objective: To determine what perceptions legal professionals have about law librarians

The results of the following questions from the legal professional survey were analysed in relation to this objective:

**Q8: How aware are you of the work undertaken by the librarian(s)?**

The findings from this question are mixed, with the answer ‘Very aware’ getting the highest response rate (36%) for how aware the participants are of the work of librarians.
Q11: How high is the profile of the librarian(s) within the organisation?

The findings from this question are that while none of the participants in the legal professional survey believe the librarians have an ‘Extremely high’ profile, 40% claim that they have a ‘Very high’ profile.
Q12: How aware are you of the skillsets of the librarian(s)?

The findings from this question are that 48% of the participants are ‘Moderately aware’ of the skills of the librarians and none of them are ‘Not at all aware’.
Cross-tabulations in relation to the perceptions legal professionals have about law librarians

The chart below is an illustration of a cross-tabulation of the answers given by legal professionals to the questions ‘Do you consider the librarian(s) to be researchers?’ and ‘Do you believe it would be beneficial for a law librarian to have studied law?’

![Bar Chart]

The findings illustrate a correlation between believing the librarians to be researchers and considering it to be beneficial for law librarians to have studied law.
The chart below is a cross-tabulation of the answers legal professionals gave to the questions ‘Do you consider the librarian(s) to be researchers?’ and ‘How often to you request the librarian(s) to undertake legal research?’

![Bar Chart]

The findings illustrate that there is a correlation between how often law librarians undertake research for legal professionals and whether or not the legal professionals view them as researchers.
The chart below is a cross-tabulation of the answers legal professionals gave to the questions ‘Do you consider the librarian(s) to be educators?’ and ‘How often do you receive training from the librarian(s)?’

The findings illustrate that the legal professionals consider the librarians to be educators regardless of how frequently they receive training from them.
Objective: To determine the self-perception of law librarians

The results of the following questions from the law librarian survey were analysed in relation to this objective:

**Q4: How challenging is your job?**

The majority of the participants of the librarian survey (60%) claim that their job is very challenging. None of the participants claimed that their job was ‘Slightly challenging’ or ‘Not at all challenging’.
Q6: How aware are users of the library of your contribution to the organisation?

The majority of the participants in the library survey (68%) believe that users of their service are moderately aware of their contribution to the organisation. None of the participants believe that the users are either ‘Extremely aware’ or ‘Not at all aware’.
Q7: How often do users of the library express gratitude for your contribution?

The majority of the participants in the library survey believe that gratitude is expressed either ‘Extremely often’ (32%) or ‘Very often’ (36%). None of the participants believe that gratitude is not expressed at all.
Q9: Are you satisfied that users of the library are aware of your skillsets?

The responses to the question in relation to how aware users of the library are of librarians’ skillsets is very mixed. While 32% claim that they are ‘Moderately satisfied’, 12% are ‘Not satisfied’. None of the participants are ‘Extremely satisfied.’
Q10: Are you satisfied that you are given an opportunity to utilise these skills regularly within your role?

A large number of participants are either ‘Very satisfied’ (32%) or ‘Moderately satisfied’ (44%) that they get to utilise their skills as a librarian. 16% are ‘Extremely satisfied’ and none are ‘Not satisfied’.
Q11: How visible is the library within the firm (in comparison with other non-legal departments such as IT, Accounts, etc.)?

The participants of the librarian survey generally believe the library to be ‘Very visible’ (32%), ‘Moderately visible’ (24%), or ‘Slightly visible’ (36%). 4% believe the library to be ‘Extremely visible’ and 4% believe it to be ‘Not at all visible’.
Q12: How often are you asked to undertake legal research?

The majority of participants in the librarian survey (80%) claim to undertake legal research ‘At least once per week’.
Q13: How often do you give training on how to use library services/how to conduct research?

The majority of the participants in the librarian survey claim to give training either ‘At least once per week’ (28%), ‘At least once per fortnight’ (36%) or ‘At least once per month’ (24%).
Cross-tabulations in relation to the self-perception of law librarians

The chart below is a cross-tabulation of the answers librarians gave to the questions ‘How meaningful do you believe your contribution is to the organisation?’ and ‘How long have you been employed by your organisation as a librarian?’

The findings show that the librarians who have been employed for ten years or more are most likely to find their contribution to be 'Very meaningful'.

![Bar Chart](chart.png)
The chart below is a cross-tabulation of the answers librarians gave to the questions ‘How likely do you think it is that users of the library would describe librarians as researchers?’ and ‘How often do you give training on how to use the library services/how to conduct research?’

The findings show that there is a correlation for librarians between how often they undertake legal research and how likely they believe legal professionals to consider them to be researchers.
Objective: To identify differences in perceptions between legal professionals and law librarians in relation to the work of law librarians

Q14: How likely do you think it is that users of the library would describe librarians as researchers? (Question answered by law librarians)

The participants in the librarian survey think it is ‘Slightly likely’ (36%) that lawyers would consider the librarians to be researchers. 20% believe it is ‘Very likely’ and 20% think it is ‘Moderately likely’.
**Q15: Do you consider the librarian(s) to be researchers?** (Question answered by legal professionals)

The findings from this question are that the majority (60%) of the participants in the legal professional survey consider librarians to be researchers. This is despite the fact that 36% of librarians believe it is only 'Slightly likely' that legal professionals would consider librarians to be researchers.
**Q14: How likely do you think it is that users of the library would describe librarians as educators?** (Question answered by law librarians)

![Bar chart showing responses](chart.png)

The findings of this question are mixed, with 28% claiming it is ‘Very likely’ that the lawyers consider librarians to be educators and a further 28% claiming it is ‘Slightly likely’.
Q16: Do you consider the librarian(s) to be educators? (Question answered by legal professionals)

The findings from this question are that the majority (92%) of the participants in the legal professional survey consider librarians to be educators. This contrasts with the fact that law librarians were very mixed as to how likely it is that legal professionals would consider them to be educators. This is also contrasted with the findings that 60% of the participants consider librarians to be researchers, so there is evidence that the image of librarian as educator is stronger than the image of librarian as researcher in the minds of legal professionals.
Q16: Do you believe it would be beneficial for a law librarian to have studied law?

(Question answered by law librarians)

The results of this question are that the majority of law librarians who participated in the survey (52%) believe it would be beneficial for a librarian to have studied law. However, a large percentage (32%) do not believe it would be beneficial.
Q17: Do you believe it would be beneficial for a librarian to have studied law? (Question answered by legal professionals)

The findings of this question are that 56% of the participants of the legal professional survey believe that it would be beneficial for a law librarian to have studied law. Only 8% of legal professionals do not think it would be beneficial, which is contrasted with the 32% of librarians who believe it would not be beneficial.
Q17: Do you believe law librarians who have studied law are likely to be more competent/efficient than those who have not? (Question answered by law librarians)

The findings from this question are that the majority of the participants in the law librarian survey (72%) do not believe that librarians who have studied law are likely to be more competent or efficient than those who have not.
Q18: Do you believe that law librarians who have studied law are likely to be more competent/efficient than those who have not? (Question answered by legal professionals)

The findings from this are that 44% of the participants in the legal professional survey do not believe that law librarians who have studied law would be more competent than those who have not. This is in contrast to the 72% of law librarians who do not believe that a law librarian who has studied law is likely to be more competent or efficient than one who has not.
Q18: Do you believe it is necessary to obtain a formal qualification in order to work as a law librarian? (Question answered by law librarians)

The findings from this question are that the majority (88%) of the participants in the librarian survey believe that it is necessary to have a formal qualification in order to work as a librarian.
Q19: Do you believe it is necessary to obtain a formal qualification in order to work as a law librarian? (Question answered by legal professionals)

The findings from this question are that 56% of the participants of the legal professional survey believe that it is necessary for a librarian to have a formal qualification, whilst 40% have no opinion. This is a contrast to the 88% of librarians who believe it is necessary to have a formal qualification.
Objective: To identify what value law librarians believe they add to their organisations

The results of the following question from the librarian survey were analysed in relation to this objective:

**Q5: As a librarian, how meaningful do you believe your contribution to be to the organisation?**

The majority of the participants in the librarian survey (60%) claim that their contribution to their organisation is very meaningful. None of the participants stated that it was either ‘Slightly meaningful’ or ‘Not at all meaningful’.
Objective: To ascertain whether or not the value of law librarians is recognised by legal professionals

The results of the following questions from the legal professional survey were analysed in relation to this objective:

**Q5: How meaningful do you believe your contribution is to the organisation?**

The findings of this question are that the majority (60%) of the participants in the legal professional questionnaire believe their contribution to the organisation to be ‘Moderately meaningful. The same percentage of law librarians believe their own contribution to be ‘Very meaningful’.
Q6: How meaningful do you believe the contribution of the librarian(s) is to the organisation?

The findings of this question are that the majority (52%) of the legal professionals who participated in this survey believe that the contribution of the librarian is ‘Very meaningful’. This is contrasted with 32% of legal professionals claiming their own contribution to the organisation is ‘Very meaningful’ and the majority of legal professionals believing that their own contribution is ‘Moderately meaningful’ (60%).
Objective: To ascertain whether or not legal professionals believe law librarians to be professionals

The following question from the legal professional survey was analysed in relation to this objective.

**Q7: Where to the librarians fit in your organisation?**

The findings from this question are that 76% of legal professionals who participated in the survey believe that librarians make up part of the administration staff. This is in stark contrast with the fact that 100% of the participants in the librarian survey responded 'Yes' to the question: 'Do you believe you are a professional?'

It should be noted that there was no option for “Don’t know” with this question, which is a weakness that this researcher identified as one legal professional participant remarked on the
questionnaire: “I think they are part of the administration staff, but I don’t know.” Despite this, it appears that a large majority of legal professionals believe law librarians are administration staff, as opposed to professional staff.
Objective: To ascertain whether or not 'digital natives' have different perceptions of law librarians to 'digital immigrants'

A breakdown of how many of the participants in the legal professional survey are digital natives is below.

Q22: Are you a digital native?
The results of the following questions from the legal professional survey were analysed in relation to this objective:

**Q20: How likely are ‘digital natives’ to utilise the skills of librarians?**

The findings from this question are that none of the participants in the library survey believe that digital natives are ‘Not at all likely’ to use the library. A large percentage (40%) believe they are ‘Slightly likely’ to use the library.
Q21: How likely are non-digital natives to utilise the skills of the librarians?

The findings from this question are that digital immigrants (or those who are not ‘digital natives’) are considered to be more likely than digital natives to use the library by the participants in the librarian survey. 40% of the participants claim that digital immigrants are ‘Very likely’ to use the library and 28% claim that they are ‘Extremely likely’ to use the library.
**Cross-tabulations**

Further analysis was done in relation to this objective by comparing the different opinions of digital natives and digital immigrants as to whether librarians are professional or administration staff. The results are illustrated in the chart below.

The findings show that digital natives are more likely than digital immigrants to consider the librarians to be administration staff.
The findings of this chart illustrate that there is no real difference of opinion between digital immigrants and digital natives as to whether or not it would be beneficial for a law librarian to have studied law.
This chart illustrates the finding that digital natives are less likely than digital immigrants to consider it necessary for a librarian to have a library qualification.
Additional findings

**Q2: What is the highest qualification you have attained?** (Question answered by law librarians)

The majority of the participants (60%) of the librarian survey have a Master’s Degree.
Q2: What is the highest qualification you have attained? (Question answered by legal professionals)

The findings from this question are that the majority of the participants in the legal professional survey have either a Bachelor’s Degree (40%) or a Postgraduate Diploma (36%) as their highest qualification. In contrast, the majority of the participants in the librarian questionnaire had a Master’s Degree as their highest qualification (60%).
Q3: How many years of study did it take for you to qualify as a librarian? (Question answered by law librarians)

The majority of the participants of the librarian survey (72%) took between one to two years to qualify as a librarian.
Q3: How many years of study did it take for you to qualify as a legal professional?

(Question answered by legal professionals)

The findings from this question are that the majority of participants (92%) in the legal professional survey took more than four years to qualify as a legal professional. In contrast, the majority of the participants of the survey for librarians took between one and two years to qualify (72%).
Findings of open questions

The data from the open questions was read literally. This is because there were only two open questions in each questionnaire so there is a limited amount of data to be read. The literal reading was intended to ascertain what words are used most frequently in order to analyse what themes emerged in relation to the perceptions of law librarians by themselves and legal professionals. However, in analysing qualitative data it is important not to use a purely literal reading and so the data was also read interpretatively. The interpretative reading involved this researcher inferring what was meant from the data (Mason, 2005, p. 149). Due to the fact that the questionnaires were self-administered and therefore there was no contact between the researcher and the participants, it was determined that a reflexive reading of the data was unnecessary. The starting point was to conduct a content analysis by coding different categories that appeared to occur most often, based on a cursory exploration of the data. The limitation of this method is that it is quite rigid and does not accommodate categories that do not appear frequently, despite the fact that this data may more accurately reflect the beliefs of the participants (Silverman, 2005, p. 123). In order to counteract this limitation, this researcher analysed the content once in relation to the established categories that had been coded, and again in order to analyse data that did not fit within the categories, but did appear to be worthwhile exploring.

Analysis of open questions

The findings from the open questions were coded according to certain categories that emerged most often from a literal reading of the data.

Objective: To determine the self-perception of law librarians

The first open question on the questionnaire for librarians was:
‘Describe the main areas of responsibilities of your role’

Having read the questionnaires, it was clear that there was a strong pattern of certain words being repeated. The chart below sets out the words and the occurrences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Occurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training/Teaching</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT/technology</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The themes of research and training are quite strong and it is clear that law librarians believe these are fundamental aspects of their role.

The second open question on the questionnaire for librarians was:

‘Describe the value and impact you bring to your organisation’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Occurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The answers to this question were quite varied and no strong themes emerged, other than a repeat of the ‘Research’ and ‘Training’ themes that were also uncovered by coding the answers to the first open question.

While there was a wide variety of answers, only three that identified a tangible benefit that they bring to their organisation. The answers that showed a tangible benefit were:
“I endeavour to negotiate the best deals from our suppliers of online services and have managed to realise huge savings for the firm over the years.”

“Saving lawyers’ time (and therefore money) by satisfying their research requests.”

“Because our law firm clients pay for our service, I am a fee earner for my organisation, rather than being an overhead, as is usually the case with in-house teams.”

These will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. The last quote in particular will be discussed as it is interesting to note that this participant in the survey was a legal researcher and the answers given to this questionnaire warrant more detailed discussion.

**Objective: To determine what perceptions legal professionals have about law librarians**

The process of reading the responses to the open questions by the legal professional participants proved a more difficult task. No strong themes emerged and there was no finding of the reoccurrence of certain keywords, as there was in the law librarian questionnaires. However, it is noted in the table below that two of the themes found in the law librarians also emerged from the data provided by the legal professional participants: research and training. The words that most frequently occurred are finding and providing.

*‘Describe some of the work that librarians typically undertake’*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding/providing</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As there was no clear pattern in the findings terms of the responses to this question, a selection of quotes are detailed below, which give a flavour of the variety in the responses:

“Assisting with research when we fail to return satisfactory results” (Digital native)

“Keeping track of where copies of our books are” (Digital native)

“Research into the parameters of a particular legal subject, including identifying relevant articles, precedent, legislation, etc.” (Digital immigrant)

“Finding judgments. Finding legislation”

The second open question on the questionnaire for legal professionals was:

‘Describe some of the unique skills of the librarians’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of databases</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational skills</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“They are extremely helpful in locating relevant books, helping in researching a topic and in using legal databases.” (Digital native)

It is also worth noting the finding that many of the participants consider ‘patience’ and ‘organisational skills’ to be unique skills of the librarian.

Additional findings
Helpfully, many of the participants provided additional qualitative data alongside the closed questions by writing or typing in additional information. The most relevant findings that were uncovered by this are detailed below.

This following quote was included alongside the question ‘*Do you consider the librarian(s) to be researchers?’*

“I would say the librarians are less researchers in the pure sense and more keepers of relevant knowledge” (Digital immigrant)

This contrasts strongly with “Research into the parameters of a particular legal subject, including identifying relevant articles, precedent, legislation, etc.” (Digital immigrant)

This quote was included alongside the question

‘*Where do the librarians fit in your organisation?’*

“They are part of the support staff” (Digital native)
Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter will present a discussion of the findings that were presented in the previous chapter. In order to contextualise these findings, they are presented with reference to the research questions, as set out in the literature review section.

What perceptions do legal professionals have about law librarians?

One theme that emerged very strongly from the findings and analysis is that legal professionals have a very definite perception that law librarians are educators. 92% of the legal professionals who participated in the survey answered ‘Yes’ to the question ‘Do you consider the librarian(s) to be educators?’. This is clearly a very important aspect of the work that a law librarian undertakes and it is encouraging to have evidence that legal professionals recognise and acknowledge the work of the librarian as an educator. It would be interesting to conduct further explorations in this area in relation to how law librarians managed to market or brand themselves as educators. Equally, in the open questions, the majority of the answers to the question ‘Describe some of the work that librarians typically undertake’ included the word ‘training’ or ‘teaching’. The image is such a strong one and perhaps there is scope for further research as to how law librarians managed to impress such a positive perception on legal professionals, particularly in light of the many negative stereotypes that were uncovered by the literature review. Radford and Radford (2003) highlighted the difficulties librarians have faced in overcoming the stereotypical way in which they are portrayed. However the findings of this research contradict that of Radford and Radford by proving that an overwhelming majority of the participants consider law librarians to be educators.
In contrast to this, only 60% of the participants of the legal professionals who participated answered ‘Yes’ to the question ‘Do you consider the librarian(s) to be researchers?’. This is a more concerning finding, as research is a large component of the work that law librarians generally undertake. There is definitely scope for further research in this area to attempt to uncover why it is that legal professionals acknowledge the work that librarians do as educators, but not as researchers. It was also noted from the answers to the open questions that where the word ‘research’ was mentioned, in most cases it was qualified with the word ‘assisting with’ or ‘helping with’. Equally, the open questions uncovered some very contradictory opinions about whether or not law librarians are researchers, as reiterated below:

“Research into the parameters of a particular legal subject, including identifying relevant articles, precedent, legislation, etc.” (Digital immigrant)

“I would say the librarians are less researchers in the pure sense and more keepers of relevant knowledge” (Digital immigrant)

The perception of librarians as ‘keeper of relevant knowledge’ is an old-fashioned one that is reminiscent of the image of the librarian as being the ‘keeper of books’. This provides evidence that in the minds of some legal professionals, an old-fashioned stereotype still exists about what librarians do and this supports the findings of Williamson (2002) in highlighting the difficulties librarians face in overcoming negative stereotypes.

It is, however, very encouraging to note that there is some awareness of the type of research that law librarians can conduct, as articulated by the first of these quotes.
It is also noteworthy from the findings that the majority of the law librarians have a Master’s Degree. This entails that they have undertaken rigorous academic research and through this process are skilled researchers. Perhaps if legal professionals were aware of the qualifications of librarians they would consider them to be researchers. The finding that a majority of legal professionals consider librarians to be administration, rather than professional, staff may also be linked to not have an understanding of the fact that many law librarians are qualified to Master’s level. Law librarians should market themselves in relation to the qualifications that they have.

It is apparent that legal professionals believe that law librarians are involved on some level in the process of research, but that they don’t consider them to be researchers per se. Perhaps law librarians need to be more vocal about the research skills that they have in order to achieve the same recognition for their research skills as they do for their educational skills. This finding supports the report by Brown (2014) in relation to the outsourcing of legal research by law firms to legal research specialists. It is evidence that legal research is not hugely connected in the minds of legal professionals with law librarians.

The findings also revealed a correlation between the belief that law librarians are researchers and the belief that it would be beneficial for a law librarian to have studied law. This suggests that legal professionals believe that in order to be a good researcher, it is beneficial to be an expert in the area that is being researched. Librarians must market the skills they have as researchers and communicate to legal professionals that being able to research is one of the unique skills of the librarian and these research skills are independent to being an expert in
the topic being researched. These findings support those of Naikwadi and Chaskar (2012) that librarians have difficulty in successfully marketing their skills.

The answer to the open question ‘Describe some of the work that librarians typically undertake’ mostly consisted of sentences about finding cases and legislation or assisting with queries. One of the answers, however, included "They mind our books". This answer was given by a digital native, which is interesting as the above comment about being "keepers of relevant knowledge" came from a digital immigrant. It highlights that both 'generations' have been influenced by the stereotype of the librarian as keeper of the books. This finding is also interesting in terms of the semantics of the sentence. The fact that the legal professional refers to our books is striking because it is unlikely that the same sentence would be uttered by a member of the public about public librarians. It highlights the unique nature of the users of a law library service. It supports the findings of Carter (2004) insofar as it suggests that if law librarians were to bill their hours it could change the perception that legal professionals have of them.

An interesting finding from the open question ‘Describe some of the unique skills of the librarian(s)’ was that the word 'patience' occurred five times, in contrast to the words 'research' and 'training'. Similarly the words 'organisational skills' occurred five times. Whilst the use of these phrases imply that these participants have a positive perception of the law librarians, they are somewhat unusual choices. It is particularly strange to value skills of 'patience' and 'organisational skills' when juxtaposed with the fact that the skills librarians would wish to be recognised for, i.e. research and training, occurred less frequently.
The overall findings from this researcher’s study differ from the findings uncovered by the literature insofar as the image presented of librarians in the literature was mostly negative. The only positive images presented were found by Dilevko and Gottlieb (2004) and were for (predominantly) male librarians who were obituarised in the New York Times. The rest of the findings were that the image of the librarian as an “old maid” that has persistently been associated with librarians sill pervades and is perpetuated by all forms of media. This research differs in its findings in relation to image as it was deemed to be outside of the scope of this research to look at the issue of gender. Therefore, participants were not requested to state whether they were male or female and it is a limitation of this research that nothing can be extrapolated from these findings in relation to gender. This research was concerned about how law librarians were perceived by legal professionals. The research focussed on what skills the legal professionals associated with law librarians and what value they add to their organisation. The findings are mostly positive, but do indicate that librarians are struggling to portray themselves as researchers.

**Do legal professionals value the work of law librarians?**

The findings of the research provide evidence that legal professionals do value the work done by law librarians, despite the fact that they may have misconceptions about their role. It was striking to note that the legal professionals considered the contribution of law librarians to be more meaningful than their own contribution to the firm. This contradicts the findings of Hewe (2004) that librarians are not valued due to the information age. However is it an anomalous finding when considered alongside the fact that they do not consider law librarians to be professionals and do not fully appreciate the nature of the work undertaken by law librarians. Legal professionals perhaps don't feel the need to make a "meaningful
contribution" to a law firm because the contribution they make is so tangible. They bring in clients and money for the firm and the value to they bring to the organisation is evidenced by the amount of invoices they generate. Perhaps they believe the contribution of law librarians to be more meaningful because they must be in order for them to have any value in an organisation where the majority of the staff are more obviously making money for the firm. This contradicts the findings of Carter (2004) as it suggests that legal professionals do value the contribution of the law librarian without them having to charge for their time. However, the findings do support Mosely (1999) in that it confirms that while legal professionals recognise the contribution of the law librarians as being meaningful, they do not consider them professionals and would probably not consider law librarianship as worthwhile career.

The findings support Tenopir’s findings (2008) that return-on-investment is one means of showing the value of a library, and consequently the librarian. Perhaps law librarians should communicate with stakeholders about how much money the library actually saves for the firm. They could show their value by calculating the amount of time that it would take for legal professionals to source journals and other information and calculate how much that is costing the firm is potential billable hours being spent searching for information.

The answers from the open questions also revealed what value legal professionals place on law librarians. The fact that no strong theme emerged indicates that the legal professionals do not know the value of the law librarian as they are not entirely aware of the skills and the work undertaken by the law librarian. In answer to ‘Describe some of the unique skills of the librarian(s)’, one of the participants stated "Research at a very high level as focussed on this rather than other fee earning work". This finding presents a slightly different attitude to what was previously stated about law librarians being perceived as researchers. It is interesting to
note the qualification, however, that the law librarian can undertake such work because they are not focused on fee earning work. It is an interesting insight that the legal professional included those words in this answer. It suggests that they have a perception that the librarian can afford to undertake such work, but that the legal professional does not have time as they are busy with “fee earner” work, i.e. generating revenue for the firm. The finding very strongly supports the findings of Carter (2004) that if law librarians were to become fee earners, it would positively change how they are perceived by legal professionals.

What perceptions do law librarians have of themselves?

It is evident from the findings that the law librarians believe their jobs to be very challenging. The findings provide evidence that law librarians consider research, training, and IT skills to be fundamental to their roles. The findings from the open questions also provide evidence that many law librarians consider management to be a component of their role. It is striking that the word ‘management’ did not appear in any of the questionnaires completed by legal professionals. The management aspect involved in running a library is one that has escaped the attention of the legal professionals, but is clearly a valid perception that law librarians have of themselves.

The findings also show that the law librarians are aware that their own perception of their role is not shared by the legal professionals. They findings show that they are not confident that legal professionals would perceive them as educators, which contrasts with the perception the majority of legal professionals have. The law librarians had confidence that legal professionals would perceive them to be researchers, which contradicted the findings that emerged from the data supplied by the legal professionals. Law librarians have a perception that their role is not understood by legal professionals.
This also supports the findings of Brobovitz and Griebel (2001) that law librarians are aware that they are perceived negatively (or incorrectly) and that they need to enhance their image.

**What perceptions do law librarians believe legal professionals have of law librarians?**

It is evident from the findings that law librarians are not satisfied that legal professionals are aware of their skills. This is despite the fact law librarians are satisfied that they do actually get an opportunity to utilise those skills in the workplace. This supports the findings of Hinckley (1997) that law librarians do not believe their worth is acknowledged.

**Do digital natives have a different perception of the library to digital immigrants?**

There is evidence from the findings that digital natives and digital immigrants have differing perceptions of law librarians. Digital natives are more likely than digital immigrants to consider the librarians to be part of the administration staff. They are also less likely than digital immigrants to consider it necessary for a law librarian to have a library qualification, which correlates with the fact they do not believe librarianship to be a profession.

There is also from the findings that law librarians that they perceive the digital immigrants to have a different perception of law librarians. They believe that they are less likely than digital immigrants to use their service. They also believe digital immigrants to be overly confident in their searching abilities, which supports the findings of Anderson (2005). Additional
commentary was provided by one of the law librarians, who in answer to the question ‘How likely are digital natives to utilise the skills of the librarians?’ selected ‘Slightly likely’ and wrote beside this:

“they bluff their way”

These findings add to the research in this area because it is evident that law librarians do not have confidence in the legal professionals to accurately search for and find information.

Do librarians have high profiles in law firms?

In response to the question ‘How high is the profile of the librarian(s) within the organisation?’ one of the legal professional participants selected ‘Moderately high’, but also provided some additional insight by including the words: "I would say moderately high, but it is hard to gauge. With the recent publications mentioned at 9 above I think the profile is higher than previously"

There are two interesting inferences to be found from this response. The first thing to note is that the reference to the publications is included in the answer to 9, which is the open question ‘Describe some of the work that librarians typically undertake’, to which this participant responded: “I don’t have a great awareness but the library recently gave us a number of library guides to searching case law online and a library guide to electronic resources." The first inference that can be made is that providing library guides to staff is one way in which the profile of the librarian can be raised. The second inference is that this participant believes the profile is now moderately high because of these publications. This in turn infers that prior to this the participant would have considered the profile of the librarian to be either slightly high or not at all high.
Do law librarians believe their work is valued by legal professionals?

The findings show that law librarians believe they are valued by legal professionals to a certain extent. While the law librarians state that legal professionals express gratitude for the contribution of the librarian, the findings also show that law librarians are not very confident that legal professionals are aware of what contribution they make to the organisation. 68% of them believe that users of their service are only moderately aware of the contribution they make.

During the process of analysing the findings of the open questions, it transpired that one of the participants of the survey is employed by an outsourced legal research company and works for a number of law firms. In one respect, this exposed a weakness the design of the questionnaires as participants had not been asked to state in what type of institution they work. However, such a question may have exposed fears about confidentiality, as answering such a question could potentially identify a participant. In another respect, this exposed a strength of the questionnaire design as the first draft had consisted solely of closed questions, but the revised inclusion of open question allowed for this additional information to emerge. At the literature review state of this dissertation, Brown’s (2014) research into the topic of outsourcing legal research by UK law firms found that law librarians have a negative opinion of outsourced legal researchers. The findings from this particular questionnaire gives this research a unique perspective amongst the law librarians who participated in the survey and it is worthy of detailed analysis. The findings of the open question reveal that the work
undertaken by this participant includes “working variously on enquiries from lawyers and law firm staff which include finding company and legal information – and providing current awareness updates to the lawyers.” This does not differ from the responsibilities of in-house law librarians. The findings do show a difference, however, in the value that this participant claims to bring to their organisation:

“Because our law firm clients pay for our service, I am a fee earner for my organisation, rather than being an overhead, as is usually the case with in-house teams.”

This is a very significant finding as it demonstrates the ease with which legal researchers can communicate their value. The majority of the other participants responded to this question by reiterating the type of work that they conduct in the law firm. There were a couple of exceptions whereby law librarians indicated that they create savings for their firm by negotiating deals with online suppliers or saving lawyers’ time by conducting research on their behalf. The legal researcher’s response to this question exposes the fact that it is difficult for law librarians to articulate their value and suggests this is because they do not generate revenue. This problem is very specific for law librarians, as the majority of the staff they work alongside generate revenue for the firm by billing clients, which is a tangible way to demonstrate their value. The findings from this particular questionnaire support the findings of Carter (2004), who found that law librarians would be more valued if they billed their hours.

The findings from the answers to the closed questions from the legal researcher participant did not vary greatly from those of the law librarian findings. The only significant differences
were that this participant answered “Yes” to the question ‘Do you believe law librarians who have studied law are likely to be more competent/efficient than those who have not?’

Additional findings about whether or not law librarians believe their work is valued by legal professionals emerged from the fact that some participants chose to offer further commentary to the closed questions. A sample of some of the quotes includes:

“Majority of staff adopt a can do myself attitude!”
“Surprise often expressed about the existence of my role”
“The onus is on me to prove my abilities”

These findings are evidence of the fact that law librarians feel that they need to justify their existence to the legal professionals.

**Do libraries have high profiles in law firms?**

It is evident that neither law librarians nor legal professionals consider that the library has a high profile within law firms. This supports the findings of Frumkin and Reese (2011) as it is evidence that libraries are not as visible to their users either in academic institutions or in law firms. Perhaps law libraries could also increase their visibility by creating a logo and branding their online collections, as per the findings of Frumkin and Reese.

**Additional findings**

There is evidence from the additional findings that law librarians generally complete a higher level of academic qualification than legal professionals, as the majority of law librarians are qualified to Master’s Degree. However, the nature of qualifying as a solicitor or lawyer
entails that the qualification period is at least four years. This is because there is a traineeship
involved after a degree in order to be professionally qualified. These findings may account
for the fact that legal professionals do not consider the law librarians to be professionals.
They are not subject to the same level of training that is involved in becoming a legal
professional. Law librarians take between one and two years to become qualified.

This research contributes to this area by providing evidence that legal professionals do place
value on the contribution of law librarians. It also provides evidence that legal professionals
have misconceptions about the nature of the work of law librarians and do not consider
librarianship to be a profession.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

There are plenty of conclusions that can be drawn from the findings uncovered by this
research. These will be examined in relation to the two hypotheses that this research was
aiming to explore.

Hypothesis 1:

Legal professionals do not value the contribution of law librarians to their organisations.

It is evident from the findings that legal professionals do in fact value the contribution that
law librarians bring to their organisation. The findings of this research reveal that there is,
however, an issue in terms of the perception legal professionals have of the type of work
conducted by law librarians. Legal professionals have a positive perception of librarians as
being helpful and patient. They do not, however, consider librarians to be professionals and
do not fully acknowledge their skills as researchers. While the exploration of this hypothesis has proved it to be incorrect, it has perhaps uncovered why law librarians do not feel valued. They are valued, but they are valued for qualities such as helpfulness, rather than for their skills.

**Hypothesis 2:**

_Law librarians believe that legal professionals do not value the contribution of law librarians to their organisations._

It is evident from the findings that law librarians are of the opinion that legal professionals do not value their contribution to the organisation. While they appreciate the gratitude that legal professionals express for the work they do, law librarians understand that legal professionals do not fully comprehend or appreciate their value in terms of the skills they bring to their organisations.

The findings show a lack of confidence amongst law librarians in terms of how they are perceived. The quotes below illustrate that law librarians feel they must justify their role:

“*Majority of staff adopt a can do myself attitude!*”

“*Surprise often expressed about the existence of my role*”

“*The onus is on me to prove my abilities*”

The issue this exposes is that the profession is still struggling to communicate its value and the group of people who are most aware of this problem are law librarians. #
Although the responses from the legal professionals were overwhelmingly positive and contradict the negative stereotype of librarians that is found in most of the literature in this area, one factor to consider is what type of legal professionals participated in the survey. It is likely that senior partners were not approached by librarians to complete the survey and that they were completed by more junior staff. The opinions of more junior legal professionals are entirely valid for this research because they are the future senior partners and many will be faced with making management decisions that could impact on law librarians. Law librarians must communicate their value to the people who can make a decision about the future of their libraries, particularly in light of Brown’s findings (2014) that UK law firms are outsourcing their legal research. The results of this survey are positive, but they will only have a positive impact upon the profession of law librarianship if they are communicated to those who are the stakeholders in law firms.

**Recommendations**

There are many areas that could be further explored in light of the findings of this research. As was stated earlier, the theme of gender was outside the scope of this research, but it certainly does seem relevant to the wider community of librarians and it would be worthwhile to conduct a study about professions that are female-dominated and if there is a link between gender and the successful communication of the value of a profession.

Further analysis could also be done in relation to whether or not it would benefit law librarian’s to undergo a ‘traineeship’ of sorts, to mirror the training of legal professionals. Legal professionals do not at the moment recognise the academic achievements entailed in librarianship and perhaps if this aspect was more visible to them, they would place a higher value on law librarians.
Another area that could be worth exploring is the benefits, or not, of membership of a professional organisation. The majority of law librarians and legal professionals are members of professional organisations that represent their interests. It would be interesting to ascertain what impact this membership has on the perception of law librarians or if it can be used to increase the value of law librarians in the minds of legal professionals.

In the meantime, it is evident that law librarians should use marketing and branding in order to raise their profiles and communicate their value to legal professionals.

**Self-Reflection**

The experience of conducting and writing this research has been one that has proven to be ultimately very rewarding. Having never undertaken research on this scale before, it was unchartered territory and the biggest academic challenge I have faced. My Masters was a taught course, so to undertake independent research for the first time was daunting. However, I was keen to immerse myself in the process and to experience this level of academic independence and rigour.

The decision to enrol on the course was not taken lightly and I was aware that it would require dedication and hard work. Working fulltime presents an extra challenge as it meant I had to learn how to manage my time, not just to attend lectures, but to keep up-to-date with the literature and to prepare for presentations and assignments. These skills enabled me to better manage my time when conducting this research.
The Masters introduced me to the library profession, which was something I knew little about before I commenced the course. Since completing the course and having found employment in a relevant area, I have developed a genuine passion for the profession of librarianship and an interest in how the profession is developing. My passion for the profession grew alongside my frustration at how the profession was perceived and the many misconceptions about what a librarian does. The topic I chose for my thesis was inspired by this and my interest in it allowed me to keep momentum. Undertaking research on this scale is quite daunting and I suspect that having an interest in the topic helps to keep focussed and I was genuinely interested in what the research would uncover.

My topic evolved gradually. Initially, I wanted to do something in relation to the library professional and information technology. I felt, and still do, that this is a very relevant and important area for research. However, narrowing this topic down to something specific proved difficult. I concluded that I just didn’t have the passion for that particular topic. The next stage was deciding that what really fascinated me was the perception of librarians. At this point, I decided that I would do a thesis on rebranding librarians. Specifically, I was interested in rebranding librarians as information professionals and whether or not this would have an impact on the perceptions people have of librarians. My research topic evolved organically from this. Working in a law firm gave me plenty of anecdotal evidence and primary research that formed my opinion that the librarians were not very highly valued. Due to my vested interest in this topic, I finally concluded that my topic should be on the subject of perceptions of law librarians. I was curious not only about how they felt about themselves, but about how their legal professional colleagues felt about them. From the course and from contacts I have made since doing the course, I now have quite a few librarian friends, working in various types of libraries. I am always struck by the fact that each one dismays at
the perception that people have of them and I wondered if they were actually correct that people had negative perceptions of librarians.

There is vast amount of literature on the topic of the image of librarians. Finding sources proved quite easy, but the task of choosing what literature to include in my literature review was more difficult. It took a lot of time and consideration to determine which articles were worthy of inclusion and which should be left out. I based this decision on which articles were most likely to link back to the findings of my research, which is obviously difficult to do when the findings haven’t yet been generated. This process of sourcing and evaluating literature continued up until the findings had been concluded, as I determined that certain articles that I had discarded were now relevant for inclusion in the literature review. The writing of a dissertation cannot be done in a linear fashion, and is in fact a cyclical process, with alterations to previous work having to be made in retrospect.

The literature for the most part supported my own findings. The most interesting part of my findings, from my perspective, was when I discovered that a legal researcher had completed one of the questionnaires. Having read an article on this very phenomenon I had formed a negative opinion of legal researchers who were used in place of law librarians. My own prejudice was exposed when I read the questionnaire with an assumption that the answers given would be in contrast to those given by law librarians. However, there was no real difference in the answers given (apart from the value they bring and their belief that law librarians should study law). Overall the outcomes of my findings were similar to the findings I uncovered in the literature review. This dissertation does explore perceptions and beliefs of legal professionals and law librarians, but it also asks a lot of questions that further research could explore.
Conducting independent research on this scale gives a unique insight into how a person learns and the different learning styles that best suit different people. Kolb’s Four Learning Style Preferences as detailed by Sugarman (1985, p. 265) gave me an insight into what type of learner I am.

I assessed my own learning style based on the learning cycle as detailed in the chart above. I also completed a questionnaire based on Kolb’s learning styles and adapted by Honey and Mumford (1986). The combined results of my own instinct of how I prefer to learn combined with the results of the survey I completed demonstrated that my preferred style is a combination of Active Experimentation and Abstract Conceptualization. There are 80 questions on the Honey and Mumford learning style questionnaire. For each question that you
tick, you score a point for one of the following: Activist; Reflector; Theorist; or Pragmatist. The majority of the answers I gave corresponded to Activist. Activist learners are “open-minded, not sceptical, and this tends to make them enthusiastic about anything new.” (1986). This does ring true for me as my academic interests are quite varied. However, I also ticked a large amount of questions that corresponded to Reflector so I think the reality is that I have a mixture of the two styles. Reflectors “like to stand back and ponder experiences and observe them from many different perspectives.” (1986). It is probably beneficial to have a mixture of learning styles as one seems to compensate for the other in this instance. Activists are not very cautious and tend to jump in to new challenges quickly, whereas Reflectors are cautious and think before they act. The style that I ticked the least amount of boxes for is Theorist, which is something I may have to work on as according to Honey and Mumford theorists “think problems through in a vertical, step by step, logical way.”

The knowledge that I have a preferred learning style is something that will positively impact on my career. Being aware of what learning style best suits me will allow me to choose this option as I continue to develop as a professional and as a person. Additionally, the awareness of different learning styles is a tool I can use when I am devising teaching modules for library databases, which is a component of my current role.

Overall, the researching and writing of this dissertation was a positive experience. However, there were some negative aspects to the process. I decided to defer my thesis shortly after I had sent out my questionnaires. Much of my time for the previous two years had been taken up with lectures in the evening and studying for assignments. I felt that at that time that I wanted to have a more balanced life and to take some time out from studying. As a close family member was very ill, I decided to take some carer’s leave from work at this time too,
which meant that I would not have the ability to balance the work I was doing with the time on carer’s leave and studying for a dissertation. I have no regrets about taking carer’s leave and when I made the decision I knew I would not regret it because it was incredibly rewarding and I’m grateful to my employers that they accommodated my request and to DBS for facilitating my deferral. However, it is difficult to take time out from a project like this and then come back to it some months later. I feel at a certain point I did lose some momentum, but my interest in the topic allowed me to get back on track. If I was giving advice to anyone undertaking a Master’s now, I would advise them not to defer their thesis unless they had a very sound reason to do so.

Above all, I have learned how heart-breaking it is to spend time and effort devising questionnaires and have vowed to never again ignore someone who asks me to take part in a survey!
Bibliography


Appendix A

Notes:

For the purpose of this survey, a ‘digital native’ is defined as a person who was born after 1985

Questionnaire for librarians:

Describe the main areas of responsibilities of your role

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Describe the value and impact you bring to your organisation

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

1. How long have you been employed by your organisation as a librarian?

Less than a year

Between one and three years

Between three and five years

Between five and ten years

More than ten years

2. What is the highest qualification you have attained?

Bachelor’s Degree

Postgraduate Diploma

MA/MSc
PhD

Other (If other, please specify): ______________________

3. How many years of study did it take for you to qualify as a librarian?

1-2 years

2-3 years

3-4 years

More than four years

If not yet qualified, please state how long you will have been studying for by the time you qualify: ________________

Not formally qualified

4. How challenging is your job?

Extremely challenging

Very challenging

Moderately challenging

Slightly challenging

Not at all challenging

5. As a librarian, how meaningful do you believe your contribution to be to the organisation?

Extremely meaningful

Very meaningful

Moderately meaningful

Slightly meaningful

Not at all meaningful

6. How aware are users of the library of your contribution to the organisation?

Extremely aware

Very aware

Moderately aware
Slightly aware
Not at all aware

7. How often do users of the library express gratitude for your contribution?
Extremely often
Very often
Moderately often
Slightly often
Not at all

8. How high is your profile as a librarian within the organisation?
Extremely high
Very high
Moderately high
Slightly high
Not at all high

9. Are you satisfied that users of the library are aware of your skillsets?
Extremely satisfied
Very satisfied
Moderately satisfied
Slightly satisfied
Not satisfied

10. Are you satisfied that you are given an opportunity to utilise these skills regularly within your role?
Extremely satisfied
Very satisfied
Moderately satisfied
Slightly satisfied
Not satisfied
11. How visible is the library within the firm (in comparison with other non-legal departments such as IT, Accounts, etc.)?

Extremely visible
Very visible
Moderately visible
Slightly visible
Not at all visible

12. How often are you asked to undertake legal research?

At least once per week
At least once per fortnight
At least once per month
Less than once per month
Quarterly
Never

13. How often do you give training on how to use library services/how to conduct research?

At least once per week
At least once per fortnight
At least once per month
Less than once per month
Quarterly
Never

14. How likely do you think it is that users of the library would describe librarians as researchers?

Extremely likely
Very likely
Moderately likely
Slightly likely
15. How likely do you think it is that users of the library would describe librarians as educators?

Extremely likely
Very likely
Moderately likely
Slightly likely
Not at all

16. Do you believe it would be beneficial for a law librarian to have studied law?

Yes
No
No opinion

17. Do you believe law librarians who have studied law are likely to be more competent/efficient than those who have not?

Yes
No
No opinion

18. Do you believe it is necessary to obtain a formal library qualification in order to work as a law librarian?

Yes
No
No opinion

19. Do you believe law librarians are professionals?

Yes
No
No opinion
20. How likely are 'digital natives’ to utilise the skills of librarians?

Extremely likely

Very likely

Moderately likely

Slightly likely

Not at all

21. How likely are non-digital natives to utilise the skills of librarians?

Extremely likely

Very likely

Moderately likely

Slightly likely

Not at all

22. Are you a member of a professional body that represents librarians?

Yes

No
Notes:

For the purpose of this survey, a ‘digital native’ is defined as a person who was born after 1985

Questionnaire for users of the library:

1. How long have you been employed by your current organisation?
   - Less than a year
   - Between one and three years
   - Between three and five years
   - Between five and ten years
   - More than ten years

2. What is the highest qualification you have attained?
   - Bachelor’s Degree
   - Postgraduate Diploma
   - MA/MSc
   - PhD
   - Other (If other, please specify):__________________

3. How many years of study did it take for you to qualify as a legal professional?
   - 1-2 years
   - 2-3 years
   - 3-4 years
   - More than 4 years

If not yet qualified, please state how long you will have been studying towards qualification for by the time you qualify:______________
4. How challenging is your job?
Extremely challenging
Very challenging
Moderately challenging
Slightly challenging
Not at all challenging

5. How meaningful do you believe your contribution is to the organisation?
Extremely meaningful
Very meaningful
Moderately meaningful
Slightly meaningful
Not at all meaningful

6. How meaningful do you believe the contribution of the librarian(s) is to the organisation?
Extremely meaningful
Very meaningful
Moderately meaningful
Slightly meaningful
Not at all meaningful

7. Where do the librarians fit in your organisation?
They are part of the administration staff
They are part of the professional staff
8. How aware are you of the work undertaken by the librarian(s)?

Extremely aware
Very aware
Moderately aware
Slightly aware
Not at all aware

9. Describe some of the work that librarians typically undertake

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

10. How often do you express gratitude to the librarian(s) for their contribution?

Extremely often
Very often
Moderately often
Slightly often
Not at all

11. How high is the profile of the librarian(s) within the organisation?

Extremely high
Very high
Moderately high
Slightly high
Not at all high
12. How aware are you of the skillsets of the librarian(s)?

Extremely aware
Very aware
Moderately aware
Slightly aware
Not aware

13. Describe some of the unique skills of the librarian(s):

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

14. How satisfied are you that you utilise the skills of the librarian(s) regularly within your role?

Extremely satisfied
Very satisfied
Moderately satisfied
Slightly satisfied
Not satisfied

15. Do you consider the librarian(s) to be researchers?

Yes
No
No opinion
16. Do you consider the librarian(s) to be educators?

Yes

No

No opinion

17. Do you believe it would be beneficial for a law librarian to have studied law?

Yes

No

No opinion

18. Do you believe that law librarians who have studied law are likely to be more competent/efficient than those who have not?

Yes

No

No opinion

19. Do you believe it is necessary to obtain a formal library qualification in order to work as a law librarian?

Yes

No

No opinion

20. How often do you request the librarian(s) to undertake legal research?

At least once per week

At least once per fortnight

At least once per month

Less than once per month

Quarterly

Never
21. How often do you receive training from the librarian(s)?
   At least once per week
   At least once per fortnight
   At least once per month
   Less than once per month
   Quarterly
   Never

22. Are you a digital native?
   Yes
   No

23. Are you a member of a professional body that represents legal professionals?
   Yes
   No
Appendix B

Dear All,

I am currently at the dissertation stage of an MSc in Information and Library Management in DBS in Dublin. For my dissertation, I have chosen to carry out research on law librarians. My chosen topic relates to the perceptions of the role of law librarians within their organisation. I am carrying out surveys of both law librarians and legal professionals in order to ascertain what differences there are between their perceptions in terms of how law librarians contribute to their organisation.

Please find attached to this email two documents; the first is a questionnaire for librarians and I would be very grateful if you could take the time to complete this and return it to me. It should only take five to ten minutes to complete.

The second attachment is to be completed by legal professionals and I would be obliged if you could facilitate me by circulating this within your organisation to appropriate people who you think might take the time to fill this out. Again, it would require between five and ten minutes of their time.

I would be grateful if you would then return both documents to me at niamhdbs@gmail.com by Friday 27 June 2014.

I hope that the results of the surveys will give up-to-date data on how law librarians are perceived and to make some findings and recommendations based on this.

Please contact me at niamhdbs@gmail.com if you have any questions about the survey.

Thank you very much in advance for your help and time with this. It is very much appreciated!

Kind regards,

Niamh Hanratty
MSc Student, Dublin Business School