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Library and Information Studies Centre

Library and Information Studies Centre

University of Cape Town

Annual Report

January to October 2012

for the

Library and Information Studies Centre Advisory Board Meeting

05 November 2012

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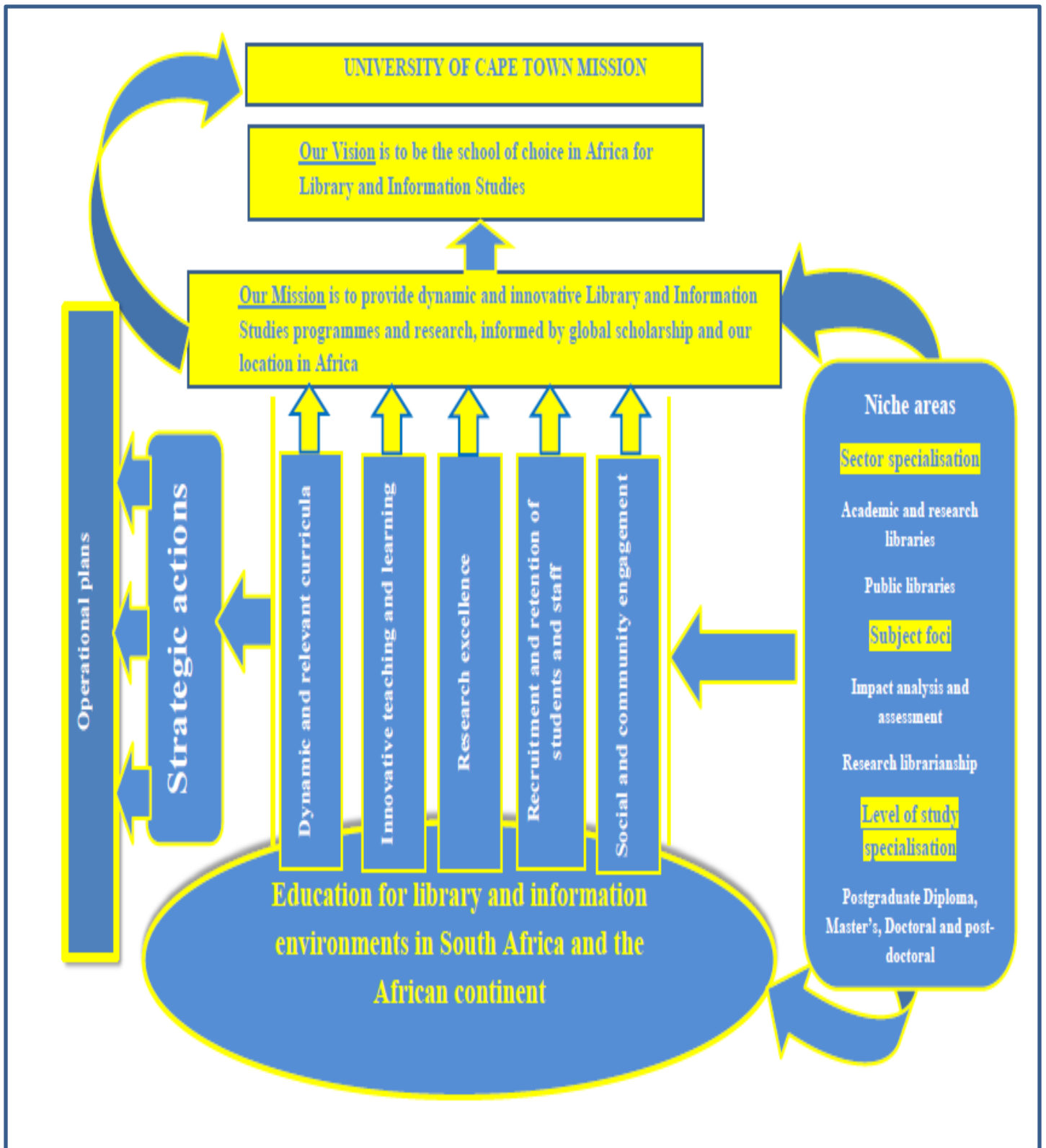
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1. Context and introduction

Founded as the School of Librarianship in 1939, the Library and Information Studies Centre (LISC), is the oldest source of professional education in Library and Information Science in Africa. In 2012, the University of Cape Town (UCT) re-affirmed its commitment to the continuation of library and information studies at UCT. The newly named Library and Information Studies Centre (LISC) is located organisationally within the University of Cape Town Libraries and offers, through the Faculty of Humanities, programmes in Library and Information Studies: the Postgraduate Diploma in Library and Information Studies, Masters' programmes (by coursework and research) and PhD studies. The Humanities Faculty oversees registration of its students, has academic oversight of both its curricula and programmes, and its quality assurance. LISC, through its teaching and research programmes, offers the library and information services (LIS) sector a postgraduate route for attaining professional qualifications and further specialisations. The University, in January 2012, appointed a Head at Associate Professor level on a three-year contract to take LISC forward as an academic project within UCT. The Head is supported by four one-third contract retirees and a part-time administrator. LISC undertook a radical review of its teaching and research programmes which are now firmly located within a focused strategic framework informed by the strategic directions of its parent organisation, the University of Cape Town. This annual report for the period January to October 2012 highlights the activities of LISC in response to these strategic directions.

2. LISC Strategic Directions 2012-2016

LISC Strategic Directions 2012-2016 (Appendix A) is the result of a series of strategic planning workshops in the first semester of 2012 and is intended to be robust, dynamic and fit for purpose to provide LIS teaching, learning and research for a new generation of library and information professionals. The mission and the vision are aligned to that of the University of Cape Town and for a 21st century library and information environment. Based on a set of core values (namely, Academic and intellectual leadership, Excellence in scholarship, Excellence in teaching and learning, Relevant and cutting-edge LIS research and Social justice) these strategic directions which are graphically captured in *Figure 1* are intended to provide LISC with focus and direction in all its endeavours as an academic unit.

Figure 1: Graphic representation of LISC Strategic Directions

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN MISSION

Our Vision is to be the school of choice in Africa for Library and Information Studies

Our Mission is to provide dynamic and innovative Library and Information Studies programmes and research, informed by global scholarship and our location in Africa

Operational plans

Strategic actions

Dynamic and relevant curricula

Innovative teaching and learning

Research excellence

Recruitment and retention of students and staff

Social and community engagement

Education for library and information environments in South Africa and the African continent

Niche areas

Sector specialisation

Academic and research libraries

Public libraries

Subject foci

Impact analysis and assessment

Research librarianship

Level of study specialisation

Postgraduate Diploma, Master's, Doctoral and post-doctoral

3. Curriculum renewal

The Business Plan (Appendix B) submitted to the University in January 2012 as part of the re-instatement of LIS studies at UCT indicated that due to the sudden decision to continue with the LIS programme at UCT, the existing curriculum would be followed in 2012 but this year would also see the continuation of a process of curriculum renewal which had already begun. Much energy in 2012 was devoted to curriculum renewal which took cognizance of trends re-defining the LIS sector and delivery of information and information-related services, particularly those in the academic and public library sectors which are identified in our strategic framework (Appendix A) as LISC's sector specialisations. This culminated in a re-curriculated Postgraduate Diploma in Library and Information Studies (PGDipLIS) at NQF Level 8 (see Appendix C) which allows direct articulation to masters' studies. This professional qualification offers a conspectus of the field of LIS. Its core educational programme, grounded in philosophy and theory, is enriched by the participation of specialist practitioners from UCT Libraries in new areas impacting on scholarly communications such as digitization, metadata handling, open access, institutional repositories, etc.

LISC's new synergistic relations with UCT Libraries very quickly revealed the need by academic libraries of research-led universities for deeper level skills and competencies in new areas such digital curation, research librarianship and leadership and management in library and information services. It was quickly realised that these high level skills required master's level study with options for specialisations in these areas. With support from the Humanities Faculty and the University Administration, LISC was able in 2012 to curriculate a new-look coursework master's programme (Master of Library and Information Studies (MLIS)) which addresses the skills and competencies required by the modern LIS sector (see Appendix D). Both the re-curriculated PGDipLIS and the new MLIS have been through the Faculty's rigorous approval process and have acquired university approval for offering in 2013, with UCT's Institutional Planning Department attending to the necessary HEQC requirements. The delivery of both these programmes in 2013 would be enriched not only by the participation of specialist practitioners from UCT Libraries, but also by that of specialists from other parts of UCT as well as from outside of UCT. These include a digital curation specialist from DataFirst, advocacy and marketing specialists from the Commerce Faculty, technology specialists from Enterprise Content Management, a metadata specialist consultant and a visiting digital libraries academic from the University of Parma in Italy.

4. Teaching and learning

While 2012 saw the continuation of the existing PGDipLIS curriculum for practical reasons, where possible, new ideas considered for the revised curriculum were introduced into the teaching and learning. Classroom facilitators emphasised a constructivist approach to teaching and learning where students, coming from a diversity of backgrounds, were considered to be significant role players in the construction of knowledge in the classroom. In this context, debate

and discussions, case-study approaches, practical hands-on sessions, role-play, intensive computer laboratory sessions involving exposure to a variety of information resources in a state-of-the-art academic library, and a variety of assessment methods were important curriculum delivery methods used to promote collaborative learning and critical thinking.

LISC's Business Plan (Appendix B) indicated that advancing ICTs allows for creative exploitation of a variety of curriculum delivery models to accommodate students coming from a diversity of contexts. These include part-time offerings, block-release options, online course facilitation using learning management tools, the use of Open Educational Resources via open access platforms, blended learning, etc. While there are plans to experiment with some of these innovative delivery methods in the future, 2012 focused on the implementation of the block release option to accommodate ten scholarship recipients in the PGDipLIS from the City of Johannesburg Public Library Services in the Carnegie funded Next Generation Public Librarian Scholarship Programme (NGPLS Programme) awarded to and project managed by the professional body, LIASA (Library and Information Association of South Africa).

It took much creativity with the time-table and much effort (often 'double-teaching') on the part of teaching staff to synchronise full-time, part-time and block release offerings so that all three categories could sit the same examinations and complete the same projects at the end of each semester. However, this was accepted in the spirit of supporting the development of a corps of 'next generation librarians'. While a 100% pass was achieved at the end of the first semester of 2012, this was not without effort due to the mixed abilities in the 2012 PGDipLIS classroom (20 students) and the presence of 'working students' some of whom had come back to studies after more than 20 years. The class consisted of a mix of recent UCT graduates; part-time and block release students from public and academic libraries in Cape Town; and, 'mature' students from the City of Johannesburg Public Library Services. Students 'at risk" were identified early in the programme, and interventions were put in place immediately to assist them. These included integrating into lessons instruction on basic academic conventions in writing, examination and presentation, allowing for drafts of projects to ascertain if the students are on the right track, pairing stronger students with weaker ones to facilitate peer learning, etc. All interventions undertaken for both the formative (projects) and summative (examinations) assessment methods were done within UCT assessment guidelines.

LISC is confident that the block release option used closely with UCT's e-platform, Vula, to manage teaching and learning during students' 'away weeks', has been a successful delivery mode in 2012. In fact some employed individuals from the Western Cape who intended to register for the PGDipLIS part-time, ended up choosing the block release option which they found more attractive. LISC wishes to continue with this delivery mode in 2013 and to establish this as a niche for UCT to attract students from across the country who are employed but wish to up-grade their LIS qualifications. LISC also looks forward to 2013 presenting it with more space

and resources to experiment with online learning management tools for enriched facilitation of the block release option as well other delivery modes.

On 31 October 2012 the PGDipLIS students sat the last of their examinations and LISC concluded their academic year with a prize-giving ceremony with prizes for Best Student, for Leadership and for Library Space Planning sponsored by Exclusive Books, Wordsworth and Clarkes Bookshop, respectively. LISC believes that such a culmination of the academic year provides good incentive for students to lift the quality of their performance in preparation for delivery in the work environment and/or the pursuit of further postgraduate studies. If all goes well, LISC should have 18 (full-time and block release) PGDipLIS students at the December 2012 graduation.

5. Research

Despite a busy year which focused on strategic planning, curriculum renewal and facilitating a new curriculum delivery mode, LISC staff gave research and publication attention. This included supervising masters' and doctoral students' research, collecting data on independent and team research, and writing papers for conference presentations and for journal publication.

Soon after its re-instatement in January 2012 LIS at UCT, despite earlier knowledge in the LIS fraternity of a decision to close, managed to register ten master's studies and three doctoral studies (with full research proposals submitted to Faculty) – an indication of eagerness in the LIS fraternity to continue with or take-up LIS postgraduate studies at UCT. These figures compare favourably with the projected figures in the Business Plan (Appendix B) for 2012 for masters' and PhD registrations (seven and four, respectively). Apart from three masters' studies where students are completing the minor dissertation from an erstwhile coursework master's, the rest are mainly new registrations of master's by full dissertation. Over and above this, LISC academic staff have been engaging in 2012 with four or five individuals working on research proposals for registration early in 2013. Hence LISC is confident that registration of both research masters' and PhD studies are likely to increase in 2013. LISC is expecting at least three masters' students to complete their studies in time for the December 2012 graduation and a further three in time for the June 2013 graduation.

Among the staff of five academics currently in LISC (1 full-time contract and 4 one-third contracts), 2012 saw an average of about 1.5 publications per academic in accredited journals. This exceeds the accredited journal publication output projected in the Business Plan (Appendix B) for the first year (2012) after re-instatement. Staff have also reported findings from research (individual and team) conducted, at both local and international conferences (an average of two conference papers per staff member). Some of these important meetings include: The IFLA World Library and Information Congress (Helsinki, Finland); The Standing Conference of East, Central and Southern African Library and Information Associations (Nairobi, Kenya); The Annual National Conference of the Library and Information Association of South Africa

(Durban, South Africa); The International Conference on ICT Management (Wroclaw, Poland); The UNISA LIS Research Symposium (Pretoria, South Africa); The Annual Sabinet Conference (Cape Town, South Africa). LISC staff either did these presentations on their own or in collaboration with colleagues or research students. 2012 also saw LISC staff have chapters published in books and papers in conference proceedings. In terms of journal management, the current LISC Head was the Guest Editor for the Special Online Launch Issue of the accredited *South African Journal of Libraries and Information Science* (*SAJLIS*) which was published in October 2012, and has recently been appointed Editor-in-Chief of *SAJLIS* in its new open access format. Three academics in LISC are NRF rated with two of them having significantly improved their ratings in 2012 and the third academic being due for re-rating in 2014.

The Business Plan (Appendix B) expressed the need for LISC to partner with appropriate establishments and funding agencies in order to enhance its growth. 2012 was used to make small beginnings in this area. LISC approached Elsevier, a major publisher based in Amsterdam, to provide a scholarship for a masters' study on e-books by a student whom we see as taking this research to the PhD level. The scholarship, on the basis of a sound research proposal, has been secured and LISC sees this as opening the door for future funding and research possibilities. LISC staff have initiated meetings and maintained contact with representatives from the United States Information Service (in Pretoria) to assist in sourcing possible LIS curriculum research partners from among the some of the leading LIS schools in the USA for possible collaboration through its Fulbright Programme. LISC's networking in Europe during the IFLA World Congress in August 2012 resulted in securing a digital libraries researcher and academic from the University of Parma in Italy to teach in 2013 in our Digital Curation module of the MLIS. We are optimistic that this collaboration would lead to further collaboration involving LIS at UCT as the European continent has a strong tradition of cross-border co-operation in LIS studies at the master's and doctoral level. It is LISC's hope that 2013 and beyond would offer space and resources to take these small beginnings further so that we may build research partnerships at the national and at international levels and cultivate a healthy research environment in which to build research projects that attract funding (NRF and others), strong LIS academics, good postgraduate students and post docs - particularly in its research niche areas of impact analysis and assessment and, research librarianship as identified in LISC's strategic framework (see Appendix A).

In its quest for research excellence and cultivating a scholarly environment, LISC in 2012 initiated an Annual Research Seminar. This is scheduled for 16 November 2012 and provides an opportunity for all LISC masters' and PhD students to present (either in person or via Skype) their research-in-progress to a critical audience of LIS academics, fellow student researchers and LIS practitioners. This forum is meant to engage discussion around students' research with a view to enhancing their quality as well as to bring LIS research students together to share achievements and challenges and take encouragement from each other. Individuals from UCT Libraries engaged in service related research have also been invited to participate in this forum.

To add value to the proceedings, a guest presentation is included in the programme. For 2012, the guest presentation comes from the UCT Research Office and is on the use of research management tools.

6. Recruitment of staff and students

It is evident that LISC is very thinly spread in terms of full-time staff (1 full-time contract and 4 one-third contracts) and in the context of its objectives based on its Business Plan (Appendix B) and informed by its Strategic Directions (Appendix A). LISC has managed to carry out what has been outlined above thanks to the generosity of two of the retirees on one-third contracts who have since January 2012 worked as full-time academics (despite their one-third contracts) in the spirit of their commitment to the University to support and mentor the new LISC Head and to help 'bed-down' the re-instated LIS programme at UCT. Their support, guidance and actual teaching in LISC have been invaluable. Thanks to the pro-activeness of the Executive Director of UCT Libraries, LISC has secured through a rigorous process of advertising, shortlisting and interviewing (overseen by HR), the appointment of a full-time contract academic with a PhD at the level of Lecturer, with effect from 0I January 2013. This is in keeping with the Senate Executive recommendation captured in the spreadsheet attached to the Business Plan (Appendix B) that new appointments would dovetail with an exit strategy for retirees currently supporting LISC. The new appointment made addresses adequately issues of diversity and succession planning in LISC. LISC's road to 'normalcy' would be enhanced with a further appointment, hopefully at the level of Senior Lecturer, in 2013. In 2012 LISC had the services of an Administrator for two-and-a-half hours a day but the 2013 budget allows for this to be increased to four hours per day due to increased student numbers, staff, etc.

LISC is cognizant of the fact that the available pool of strong LIS academics in South Africa (and internationally) is shrinking and of the need to grow a new generation of LIS academics. Hence as part of a strategy of 'growing its own timber', LISC identified among its students an individual with strong academic and research potential, secured a scholarship for her through Elsevier for full-time master's by research and brought her into the teaching programme in 2012 as a graduate assistant. With mentoring and support from the LISC Head, she has been progressing well and is being paid out of the LISC budget in accordance with UCT's teaching assistant rates and procedures.

Despite limited space to adequately market itself at the beginning of 2012, limited advertising still resulted in the final registration figure (20) for the PGDipLIS exceeding the figure of 15 projected for 2012 in the Business Plan (Appendix B) - a big jump from figures ranging between three and six in the preceding few years. The Carnegie NGPLS Programme contributed 11 students to 2012 PGDipLIS registrations. LISC is a partner with the professional body, LIASA, in this project which provides these students with full scholarship to cover tuition fees, flights between Cape Town and Johannesburg during block release weeks, airport transfers, accommodation at UCT's *All Africa House* on Middle Campus, subsistence allowance while in

Cape Town, and the provision of a lap top. LISC in 2012 delivered its end of the partnership with quality and efficiency (which LIASA has acknowledged) and hopes to receive a further cohort of these NGPLS Programme students in 2013.

In order attract good quality students (including international students), LISC in 2012 channeled much time and energy into marketing of its programmes. The Marketing Department of UCT Libraries was instrumental in putting together a battery of promotional material for LISC which included branding and material such as flyers, posters, stickers, buttons and banners. This suite of promotional material allowed LISC staff to promote the programme with confidence at the IFLA World Congress in August 2012 and to hire an exhibitor's stand at the 2012 Annual LIASA Conference in Durban. The very professional looking stand drew much attention from prospective applicants and conference delegates in general. This branding and high quality promotion has made LISC very visible on the South African LIS schools scene. The LISC Administrator has commented on the marked increase in queries coming in since our return from this national conference.
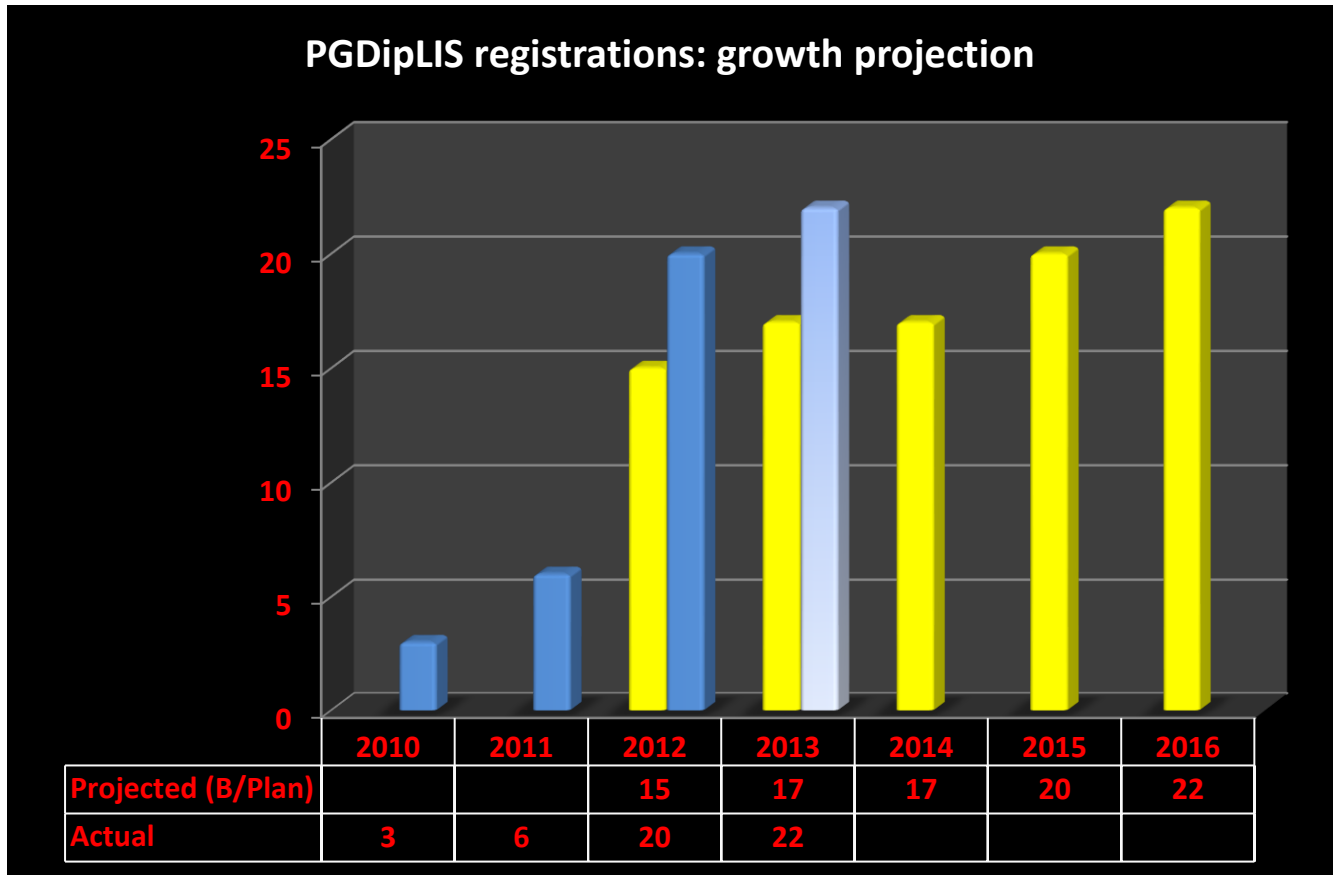
LISC has participated in the UCT Open Day and Careers Fair. The LISC website has been regularly updated in 2012. LISC is currently using its branding and promotional material to advertise its programmes on the following listservs: Liasaonline, the IFLA Africa listserv, Sabinews and the HELIG list. This covers the African continent adequately. LIS at UCT has been an attraction to students from the African continent especially at the master's and PhD levels with some of our current students and applicants coming from Zimbabwe, Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, etc. LISC is optimistic that its promotional drives would yield healthy registration figures in 2013. The Postgraduate Faculty Office in October 2012 recorded PGDipLIS applications reaching the 20 mark (and this does not include any of the Carnegie funded NGPLS Programme applicants). The new MLIS coursework master's, only recently added to the list of programmes available for application, has already drawn about five applications with figures for the first intake in 2013 being projected at ten. *Figure 2* captures the comparison in PGDipLIS registration figures for 2012 projected in the Business Plan (Appendix B), 2012 actual registrations, and a projection for 2013 based on applications as at October 2012. The graph points to an upward trajectory in PGDipLIS registrations.

7. Social and community engagement

2012 has seen LISC staff participate in numerous forums to provide intellectual guidance within forums working towards advancing development and social justice. Some of these include: the National Council for Library and Information Services which advises the Ministry of Arts and Culture and other relevant Ministries on LIS matters in South Africa; the CHEC Research Library Academy (promoting the development of research librarians in the Western Cape) and which called on the expertise of two academics from LISC to facilitate the programme; the RDA-SA Steering Committee which is looking after South Africa's adoption of standards in resource description and access; the International Standards Organisation Working Group which

is concerned with methods and procedures for assessing the impact of libraries; the Representative Council of the Library and Information Association of South Africa. These are key forums and LISC's participation in them is an indication of LISC as a source of intellectual guidance for policy makers.

Figure 2

PGDipLIS registrations: growth projection

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Projected (B/Plan)			15	17	17	20	22
Actual	3	6	20	22			

8. General

For the first half of 2012, LISC occupied office space on Level 4 of Hoerikwaggo. This space belonged to CHED (Centre for Higher Education Development) which was the previous organisational home for LIS at UCT. As part of its re-instatement at UCT and its new organsational location within UCT Libraries, LISC has been assigned office space with a dedicated teaching venue on Level 6 of the Chancellor Oppenheimer Library. However, this space would only be ready for occupation in the new year (2013) as building renovations are to take place in December 2012 when students are away. In the meantime LISC is occupying temporary office space on Level 5 of the Chancellor Oppenheimer Library. Teaching is being accommodated in Ulwazi which is the Library's specialist training venue. It is sincerely hoped

that LISC's new space currently being prepared on Level 6 of the Chancellor Oppenheimer Library is conducive to the operation of an academic unit and allows for future growth of LISC both in terms of staff as well as a cohort of master's and PhD students and post docs.

While it has been difficult for LISC staff to adjust to a new organisational culture, they have done so with much patience and discipline and did not allow this change to impact in any way on the quality of teaching, learning and research which are the core activities of this academic unit. At the same time UCT Libraries have been very hospitable and generous in integrating LISC into its organsational structure, particularly in areas such as space provision, IT support, the budget process and marketing support. LISC's new proximity to UCT Libraries has given it a close-up view of the skills and competency requirements of a modern state-of-the art academic library and this has proved very beneficial in curriculum design and development. It also allows LISC access to specialist practitioners whose expertise may be drawn on to sustain relevant and dynamic LIS curricula.

LISC holds regular departmental meetings (every six weeks) at which teaching, learning and research activities are reported and debated, administrative matters are discussed, and planning of LISC actions and activities take place. A very positive departmental culture exists. The LISC Head has immense respect for the experience and expertise of the contract retirees who have been so generously assisting to take LISC forward in this new chapter in the development of LIS studies at UCT. The LISC Head is very grateful to these individuals for the support they have given her in this challenging period since the re-instatement of this academic programme. Being a unit with postgraduate students only, LISC enjoys a warm and friendly yet professional relationship with all of its students – an atmosphere that easily encourages them to turn to us when there are difficulties relating to their studies.

9. Conclusion

LISC wishes to thank the University for giving library and information studies at UCT a 'second chance', UCT Libraries for so generously providing LISC with an organisational home, the Humanities Faculty for so patiently accommodating this somewhat 'anomalous' situation and also for the support given to us, and UCT colleagues generally for their advice and encouragement. LISC is also very grateful to its Administrator who has, on many occasions, gone beyond the call of duty to provide us with administrative support despite the limited time she spends with us. A special thanks must go to our professional body, LIASA, which has taken an active interest in the continuation of library and information studies at UCT and continues to support us as we move forward in the growth of our programmes.

Associate Professor Jaya Raju

Head: Library and Information Studies, UCT

October 2012