

# The shape and form of the 21<sup>st</sup> century academic library: a South African case

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# Overview

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- Introduction
- Research questions
- Supporting theory
- Literature review
- Empirical investigation
- Main findings and discussion
- Conclusion



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# Introduction

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## Research objective:

To ascertain the shape and form of the 21st century academic library in South Africa, including library staff and users' expectations of services rooted in technological advances of the digital era – using the case of the academic library of UCT, a leading research-intensive South African university



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# Research questions

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1. To what extent have academic libraries worldwide embraced technological advances in their services?
2. How far along are UCT Libraries in the continuum of establishing itself as a 21<sup>st</sup> century academic library service?
3. To what extent are staff accepting changes and new technologies in the academic library and how readily are they adapting their skills to accommodate these developments?
4. What are the expectations of users of the modern academic library?



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# Supporting theory

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- Organisational Learning Theory
  - “today’s progressive corporations have moved from treating [organisational] learning as an obligatory cost factor to regarding it as a weapon in the battle for competitive advantage” (Danielson & Wiggernhorn, 2003: 17).
  - Four stages of knowledge transfer: initiation, implementation, ramp-up and integration.



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# Literature review

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- Academic libraries, universities and higher education
  - Web 2.0
  - E-learning
  - E-books
  - MOOCs
  - Student success



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# Literature review

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- Digital preservation
- Mobile environment
  - QR codes
- Digital curation
- Digital scholarship
  - Digital Humanities
- Open access
- Collaboration



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# Empirical investigation

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- Largely qualitative
- Case study
- Interviews and self-administered questionnaires



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# Empirical investigation

Population	Sample size	Return
Undergraduate students	377	270 (72%)
Postgraduate students	367	231 (63%)
Researchers and academics	315	20 (6%)
Library staff (questionnaires)	95	39 (41%)
Library staff (interviews)	16	15 (94%)



# Main findings and discussion

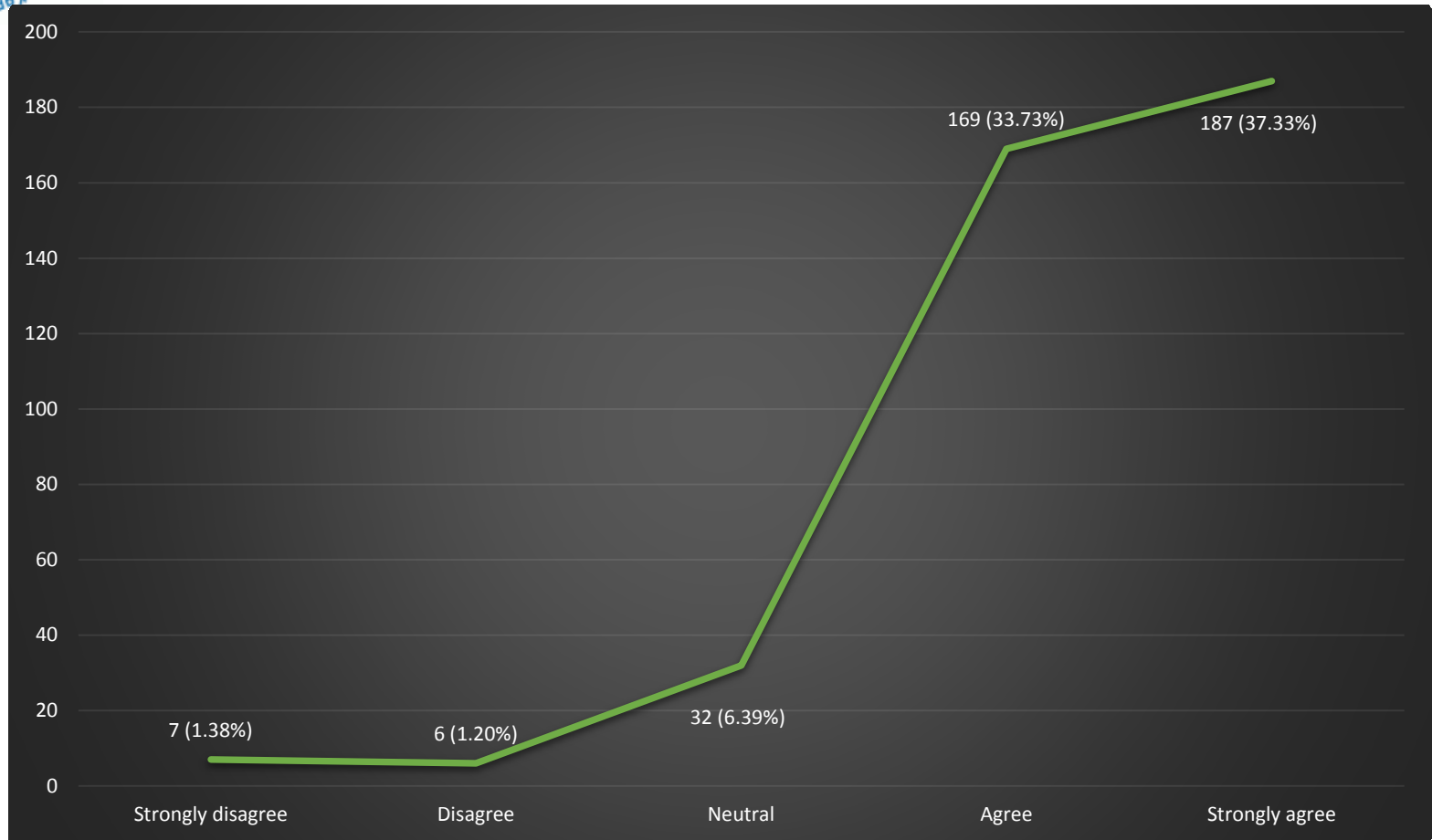
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- Academic libraries globally
- UCT Libraries as a 21st century academic library
  - *‘[UCT Libraries] has a significant budget for training and development. This is partly because of the transition from very traditional services to 21st century services’*
- Staff adaptation to technology and change
- User expectations of a modern academic library



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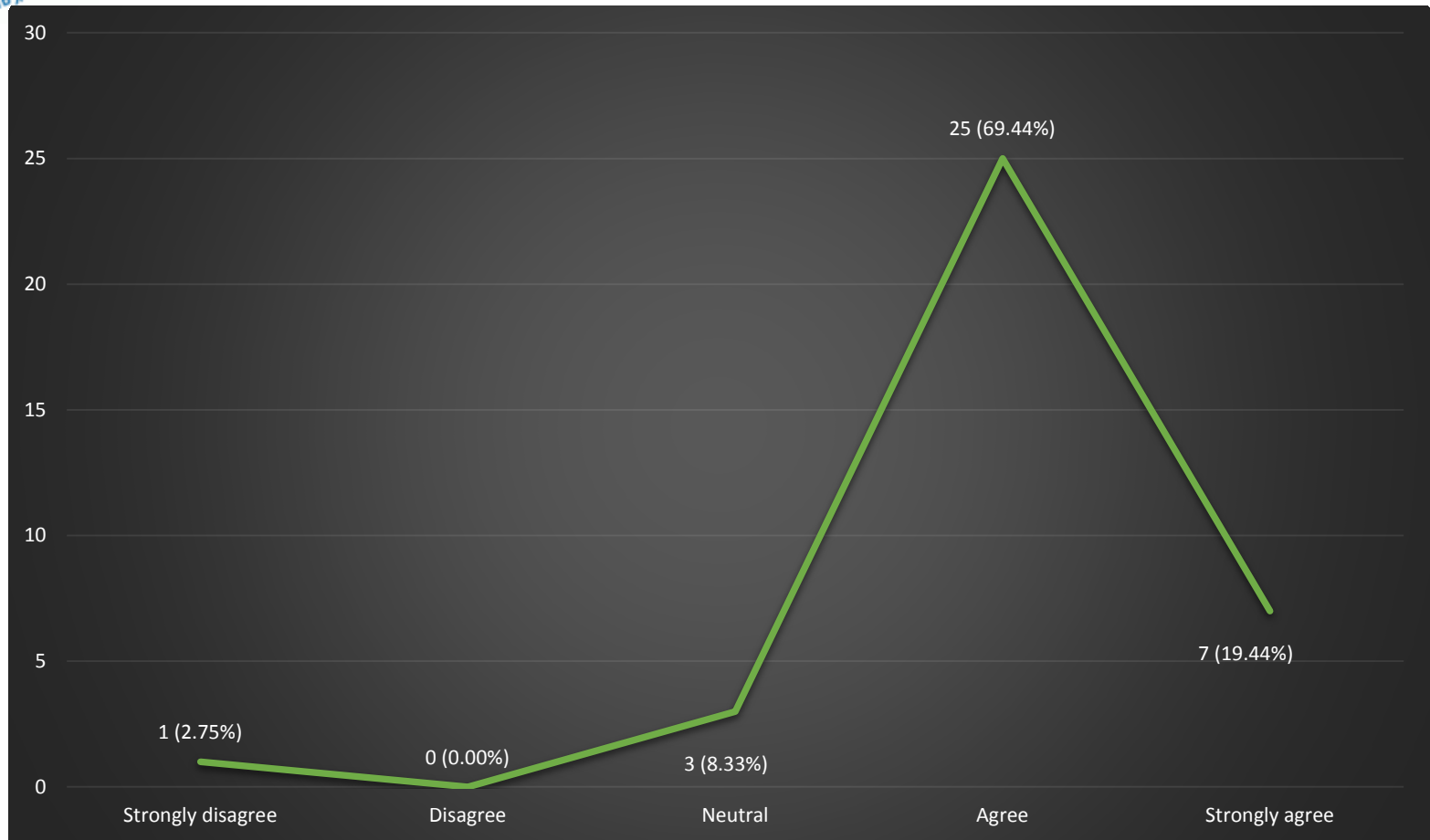
# Main findings and discussion



Users' perceptions of relevance of academic libraries (N=501)

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# Main findings and discussion



Library staff perceptions of relevance of academic libraries (N=36)

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# Conclusion

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- Academic libraries, the world over, are adapting their services according to user demands and users' use of technology
- There is a strong emphasis in UCT Libraries on organisational learning in the form of training and willingness to learn and embrace change
- While users are generally satisfied with the Library's services, there is room for marketing services users are not generally aware of



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# Conclusion

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*UCT Libraries' road to a 21st century academic library, with infrastructural developments underway for new service delivery modalities, gives it the 'form' necessary to establish a new 'shape' commensurate with the digital age; that is, an academic library service structure informed by technological advances of the current age.*



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# Thank you!

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