How Public Libraries Support the Information Needs of Homeless People

by

Louise Dowdell

Submitted to the School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Information Studies

June 2018

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
School of Information Management
Master of Information Studies
IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER

with respect to a MIS Research Project (INFO 580)

How Public Libraries Support the Information Needs of Homeless People

(hereafter referred to as 'The MIS Research Project’)

being undertaken by

Louise Dowdell

in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Information Studies, School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington.

Topic Commencement:

1. Victoria University of Wellington and its Council, its members, staff, employees, students and agents undertake no duty of care in contract, tort, or otherwise, to users (whether direct or indirect) of the MIS Research Project and make no warranties or representations of any kind whatsoever in relation to any of its contents.

2. The MIS Research Project is only made available on the basis that all users of it, whether direct or indirect, must take appropriate legal or other expert advice in relation to their own circumstances and must rely solely on their own judgment and such legal or other expert advice.

3. Under no circumstances will Victoria University of Wellington and its Council, its members, staff, employees, students or agents be liable in any way whatsoever, whether in contract, tort (including negligence), for breach of any statutory or regulatory duty (to the fullest extent permissible by law), or otherwise, to any user (whether direct or indirect) of the MIS Research Project for any loss or damage whatsoever arising directly or indirectly as a result of the use in any way of the MIS Research Project.

4. Each exclusion in the clauses of this disclaimer and each protection given by it is to be construed as a separate exclusion applying and surviving even if for any reason any of the exclusions or protections are held inapplicable in any circumstance.
Abstract

Research problem: This study investigates and analyses how public libraries support the information needs of homeless people in a large region of New Zealand. In 2017 New Zealand had the highest rate of homelessness in the OECD and more than 40,000 people were experiencing homelessness. This study has focused on adding to the knowledge of how this significant and marginalised demographic use public libraries to meet their information needs and how library policy, practice, and services support those needs. It aims to inform public library practice so that policy and services could be developed and improved in order to enable the homeless to use public libraries more equitably and effectively.

Methodology: This research was a qualitative study that used a phenomenological methodology. Non-probability, convenience sampling was used from a large New Zealand region that includes four cities and has a population of just over 500,000 people. Four homeless participants, and seven librarians from four public library networks participated. Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted in order to collect data.

Results: The findings of this study revealed that none of the participating libraries had specific policies, practices, or services in place to meet the needs of homeless people. However despite this, the libraries were providing services that help meet the information needs of their homeless patrons through the availability of WiFi, Internet, and quality collections that the homeless participants reported using on an almost daily basis. Results also confirmed that homeless patrons are using public libraries for more than just shelter and warmth and that their information needs are varied.

Implications: The findings of this study will be of interest to librarians and public libraries that have homeless patrons and want to develop improved services that more effectively meet their information needs.

Keywords: homeless (person), librarian, public library, information need, information seeking behaviour, barrier, whakapapa.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Chern Li Liew, for her support, advice, guidance, and patience throughout the duration of this research project.

I would like to thank all my participants for so willingly giving up their time and sharing their experiences with me.

I am grateful to my managers, coaches, and colleagues for the support they have given me as I worked on and completed this project.

I would like to thank Krystal Wilkie who provided invaluable advice.

Finally, I would like to thank my whānau, especially Rosa, without whom this project would never have been completed.

Ehara tāku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini.
# Table of Contents

1. Problem Statement ..................................................................................................................... 7
2. Rationale for the study .................................................................................................................. 7
3. Definition of Key Terms .............................................................................................................. 8
4. Literature Review ........................................................................................................................ 9
   4.1 Emphasis on Overseas Research and New Zealand .............................................................. 9
   4.2 Providing Services to the Homeless ...................................................................................... 10
   4.3 Information Seeking Behaviour of the Homeless ................................................................. 10
   4.4 Libraries and Social Responsibility ..................................................................................... 13
5. Research Questions .................................................................................................................... 14
6. Methodology and Methods ....................................................................................................... 15
   6.1 Population and Sample ......................................................................................................... 16
      6.1.2 Librarian participants .................................................................................................... 16
      6.1.3 Homeless participants .................................................................................................. 17
   6.2 Data Collection ...................................................................................................................... 17
   6.3 Data Analysis ........................................................................................................................ 18
   6.4 Ethical Considerations .......................................................................................................... 19
   6.5 Limitations ............................................................................................................................ 19
7. Results ......................................................................................................................................... 20
   7.1 What information do homeless people look for and expect to find at public libraries? ....... 20
      7.1.1 Homeless participant responses ................................................................................... 20
      7.1.2 Librarian participant responses .................................................................................... 21
   7.2 How do homeless people look for information at public libraries? ...................................... 22
      7.2.1 Homeless participant responses ................................................................................... 22
      7.2.2 Librarian participant responses .................................................................................... 23
   7.3 How do staff at public libraries perceive the use of the libraries by the homeless: do they feel welcome? ........................................................................................................... 24
      7.3.1 Do you (the homeless) feel welcome in public libraries and that the staff are friendly and there to help you? ........................................................................................................... 25
   7.4 What are the existing services, practices, or policies that are offered to the homeless demographic at public libraries? ........................................................................................................ 25
      7.4.1 Homeless participant perspectives on targeted services ............................................... 26
7.5 What barriers are there to homeless people finding the information they want or need at public libraries? ................................................................. 27
   7.5.1 Homeless participant responses .................................................. 27
   7.5.2 Librarian participant responses .................................................... 27
7.6 How could services be developed and improved in order to better facilitate the information seeking needs of homeless people at public libraries? ........ 28
   7.6.1 Homeless participant responses .................................................. 28
   7.6.2 Librarian participant responses .................................................... 29
8. Discussion .................................................................................................. 30
   8.1 Lack of specific policies, practices, and services ............................... 30
   8.2 Information seeking behaviour of homeless people ......................... 32
   8.3 WiFi and the Internet ....................................................................... 33
   8.4 Whakapapa, identity, and social cohesion ......................................... 33
9. Conclusion .................................................................................................. 35
   9.1 Implications ....................................................................................... 36
   The findings of this study will be of interest to librarians and public libraries that have homeless patrons and want to develop improved services that more effectively meet their information needs. ................................................................. 36
   9.2 Further research ................................................................................ 36
7. References .................................................................................................. 38
8. Appendices .................................................................................................. 44
   8.1 Participant Information Sheet ............................................................ 44
   8.2 Participant Consent Form ................................................................. 46
   8.3 Support Person/Whānau Confidentiality Agreement .......................... 47
1. Problem Statement

The purpose of this study is to investigate and analyse how public libraries support the information needs of homeless people. The objective is to add to the knowledge of how library policy, practice, and services support the information needs of homeless people, and how they could be developed and improved in order to enable the homeless to use public libraries more effectively.

2. Rationale for the study

Homelessness is increasing throughout the world. In August 2017, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) acknowledged this by issuing its *IFLA Guidelines for Library Services to People Experiencing Homelessness*.

Homelessness is also a very specific issue in New Zealand. Joseph Chamie (2017) has written that “based on national reports, it’s estimated that no less than 150 million people, or about 2 percent of the world’s population, are homeless” and the highest rate in the OECD “nearly 1 percent, is in New Zealand, where more than 40,000 people live on the streets or in emergency housing or substandard shelters.” Ensuring that the reported 40,000 homeless have equitable access to information is therefore an important issue for the information services sector in New Zealand. Consequently, there is a need to examine how public libraries support the information needs of the homeless within a New Zealand context in order to improve library services to them.

Most existing research examines the experience of the homeless in public libraries abroad and there has not been a significant amount of research undertaken on how the homeless use public libraries in New Zealand. Therefore this study aims to help address the lack of research in New Zealand.

In 2017 Zhang identified the potential for research in other regions in New Zealand apart from Auckland (Zhang, 2017, p.39). This research has therefore focused on another region of New Zealand that includes four cities and in June 2017 had a population of just over 500,000 people. Although the research is restricted to this one region of the country it benefits the New Zealand information services sector and
inform inform study scholarship by providing further insights into how public libraries support the information needs of homeless people and by supplementing past research. Increasing our knowledge regarding the use of public libraries by the homeless will, as Zhang writes, help libraries “and other agencies to come to better ideas regarding the services for the homeless community” (Zhang, 2017, p.39).

This research also corroborates and expands on issues previously explored in overseas research.

3. Definition of Key Terms

**Barrier:** something immaterial that impedes or separates (Merriam-Webster).

**Homeless (Person):** someone who lives in a homeless shelter or on the street, with no permanent address (Reitz).

**Information need:** a gap in a person's knowledge that, when experienced at the conscious level as a question, gives rise to a search for an answer (Reitz).

**Information Seeking Behavior:** is the purposive seeking for information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal. In the course of seeking, the individual may interact with manual information systems (such as a newspaper or a library), or with computer-based systems (such as the World Wide Web) (Wilson, 2000).

**Librarian:** a professionally trained person responsible for the care of a library and its contents, including the selection, processing, and organization of materials and the delivery of information, instruction, and loan services to meet the needs of its users (Reitz).

**Public library:** a library or library system that provides unrestricted access to library resources and services free of charge to all the residents of a given community, district, or geographic region, supported wholly or in part by public funds. Because public libraries have a broader mandate than academic libraries and most special libraries, they must develop their collections to reflect diversity (Reitz).
Whakapapa: genealogy, genealogical table, lineage, descent - reciting whakapapa was, and is, an important skill and reflected the importance of genealogies in Māori society in terms of leadership, land and fishing rights, kinship and status. It is central to all Māori institutions. (Te Aka Online Dictionary).

4. Literature Review

4.1 Emphasis on Overseas Research and New Zealand

Existing research examines the experience of the homeless in public libraries in the United States (Gehner, 2010; Kelleher, 2012; Giesner, 2017), the United Kingdom (Muggleton & Ruthven, 2012; Willett & Broadley, 2011), France (Gaudet, 2013), Croatia (Bunic, 2013), Egypt (Mansour, 2015), and Ghana (Markwei & Rasmussen, 2015).

Unfortunately, there has not been a significant amount of research undertaken on how public libraries in New Zealand support the information needs of homeless people, although the use of libraries by the homeless has been noted. For example Revell and Jaye (2016), observe that:

“New Zealand research has shown that homeless people often have daily routines that incorporate stops where they can attend to personal hygiene and laundry, find warmth and food, as well as companionship. These places include public toilets, public libraries, soup kitchens, and public squares and parks (Bukowski and Buetow 2011; Stolte and Hodgetts 2015; Wilkinson 1983)” (Revell & Jaye, 2016, p. 114).

However, recently in New Zealand, Zhang (2017) researched the perspectives of homeless people on public libraries. This research used Auckland City Library as a case study.

In 2008, Hodgett, Stolte, Chamberlain, Radley, Nikora, Nabalarua and Groot also examined homelessness and social inclusion at a provincial New Zealand public library and raised issues around ethnicity. Research such as this would indicate that
existing overseas research could not adequately reflect the experiences and practices of the homeless in New Zealand because of the unique cultural and socio-economic situation in New Zealand. For example, research undertaken outside New Zealand does not take into account Māori or Pacific Island cultural values that might impact on a homeless person’s behaviour in a New Zealand library context.

Both Zhang (2017) and Hodgett et al (2008) do not specifically examine the information seeking behaviour of the homeless, or how their information needs are supported, in New Zealand libraries. This research seeks to address this gap. Further to this, both of these studies provide a context for this research.

4.2 Providing Services to the Homeless

Willett and Broadley (2011) and Bunic (2013) discuss outreach programmes aimed at the homeless. Hersberger and De la Peña McCook (2005), Muggleton and Ruthven (2011), Kelleher (2012), Gaudet (2012), and Giesner (2017) explore the needs of the homeless in relation to libraries and the challenges in meeting those needs. These papers provide valuable insights into the wider context of the use of libraries by the homeless and explore the notion that for many homeless people the library is “not just a place to sleep” (Kelleher, 2012, p.19).

One of the most useful discussions from this set of literature, for the purposes of this research, is around the challenge of identifying homeless people and the notion that those who do respond to surveys might be more “well-behaved” than those who do not which could skew research results (Kelleher, 2012). This is especially relevant when undertaking non-probability sampling as has been done in this research project.

4.3 Information Seeking Behaviour of the Homeless

There has not been a great deal of research done into the information seeking behaviour of the homeless.

Mansour (2015) discusses the information seeking behaviour of beggars in Egypt, and Markwei and Rasmussen’s 2015 paper *Everyday Life Information-Seeking Behavior of Marginalized Youth: A Qualitative Study of Urban Homeless Youth in Ghana*, reports on their research to investigate the everyday life needs, information needs,
sources of information, and information seeking behaviours of homeless youth in Accra, Ghana.

The main findings of Markwei and Rasmussen’s study were that the information needs of participants related to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, that information sources were mainly interpersonal, and that a community approach to information seeking - based around social networks - was most common.

The researchers note that libraries do not have a role in the lives of the homeless youth surveyed and that there is a need for library outreach to address this.

This paper was useful for the purposes of this research for two reasons. One was its incorporation of Savolainen’s everyday life information seeking (ELIS) model which is useful for framing any research about information seeking. The second is its assertion that there is a need for international research that is outside the European/North American context. This would enable further exploration of “differing social situations and cultural values” that can affect information seeking behaviour.

In New Zealand the impact of Te Ao Māori on the information needs and information seeking behaviour of homeless people who are also Māori should be considered in any research undertaken in this area. Unfortunately little research has been conducted on the information needs of Māori. The definitive resource in this area remains Te Ara Tika: Guiding Voices: Māori Opinion on Libraries and Information Needs (Szekely, 1997) which was the result of research done at hui held throughout the country asking Māori what their information needs were, how they viewed libraries, and how libraries could better meet their information needs.
Te Ara Tika notes that:

“...the information needs of Māori can be as varied and diverse as anyone else’s information needs. Specific needs mentioned include health, education, law, business… fiction and books for general reading, recreation and enjoyment” (Szekely, 1997, p. 32).

However, Māori do have special information needs when it comes to Māori resources, including Māori language resources. As Te Ara Tika explained:

“Having made the point that Māori information needs were diverse, there was much discussion on resources of a specific Māori nature. A broad range of Māori resources were mentioned. These included Māori language material, resources on Māori culture, tribal information, Māori land information and books by Māori authors. The following groups were mentioned as having particular information needs that were specifically Māori: kōhanga reo, kura kaupapa, secondary schools, tertiary students and lecturers, Waitangi claims researchers and genealogists” (Szekely, 1997, p. 51).

The Treaty of Waitangi is also an integral part of any discussion about the information needs and rights of Māori in a library setting. As McCauley (2010) has written:

“Ideally public libraries as repositories of information and defenders of democracy, must demonstrate a commitment to biculturalism and indeed, they have an obligation to uphold Treaty values. Garraway & Szekely (1994) state ‘Biculturalism in libraries is defined as an organisational strategy based on the spirit and intent of the Treaty of Waitangi’ (p. 6). Māori cultural intellectual property is covered by Article Two of the Treaty which according to McRae & Wild (1990), 'guarantees Māori people the full, exclusive and undisturbed possession of all their taonga - tangible and intangible, however or whenever made or found’ (p. 50). This includes incorporating those values into all aspects of library policy and service” (McCauley, 2010, p. 252).

Mansour’s study is also a useful reference point for this research because it “tries to investigate the information-seeking behaviour of Egyptian beggars with regard to their thoughts, perceptions, motivations, attitudes, habits, preferences as well as challenges that may impede their use of information” (Mansour, 2015). An aspect of
the study that held particular interest for this research was the impact of illiteracy on information seeking behaviour. Mansour observes that due “to some difficulties like illiteracy and the limited education, a very large number (93.9%) of Egyptian beggars were not using any type of libraries. The use of the library, which is described as an information system, is related to education and skills associated with reading” (Mansour, 2015). The impact of illiteracy should be a factor in any research into the information seeking behaviour of the homeless, and the nature of the support they receive from a public library.

The studies of Markwei and Rasmussen, and Mansour have been done in countries other than New Zealand and with very different contexts. As already noted above, this research reflects a New Zealand situation and therefore provides a unique perspective, but does also have parallels with studies done overseas.

4.4 Libraries and Social Responsibility

The New Zealand Treasury’s Living Standards Framework: Social Cohesion notes regarding ‘Increasing Equity’: “Where inequalities persist, there will be less social capital, less trust and less sense of belonging” (New Zealand Treasury, 2017). It further quotes the OECD by stating:

“A cohesive society works towards the well-being of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and offers its members the opportunity of upward mobility” (New Zealand Treasury, 2017).

Providing the homeless with equitable access to the services offered by public libraries can therefore be seen to be contributing to social cohesion through shared community services and the building of a sense of identity.

Giesler has written that:

“An absent voice in public policy discourse related to the provision of services to the homeless population comes from such so-called third-sector organizations, agencies whose mission and function are not social services-related, but operate in that capacity. Public libraries, for example, have been characterized as de facto daytime shelter for the nation’s homeless” (Giesler,
2017, p. 188).

Giesler also notes that:

“The public library response to attempts by homeless patrons to meet their needs has trended in two opposing directions. Some libraries have set stricter rules designed to ban activities and behaviours in which homeless individuals typically engage. Other libraries, perhaps motivated by the professional organizational response to the issue and the perceived lack of coverage of the issue in library science training programs, have contemplated proactive, “out of the box” methods to compassionately serve the population” (Giesler, 2017, p. 190).

Geisler’s research is based in the United States. It would therefore be useful to explore a New Zealand context and investigate whether New Zealand librarians find “difficulty in negotiating the balance between the rights of the homeless and the rights of other library patrons” (Giesler, 2017, p. 189), as they seek to provide services that will add to the social cohesion of their community.

5. Research Questions

A phenomenological research approach focuses on guided, semi-structured interviews that rely on key research questions. The questions used in this research are outlined below:

1. What information do homeless people look for and expect to find at public libraries?
2. How do homeless people look for information at public libraries?
3. How do staff at public libraries perceive the use of the libraries by the homeless? (This question was adapted during the interview process to one that was about whether library staff perceive that homeless patrons feel welcome in their libraries and are able to use the libraries to find information as easily as other patrons.)
4. What are the existing services, practices, or policies that are offered to the homeless demographic at public libraries?
5. What information would homeless people expect to look for at public libraries? *(This question was dropped after initial interviews because of its overlap with question 1.)*

6. What barriers are there to homeless people finding the information they want or need at public libraries?

7. How could services be developed and improved in order to better facilitate the information seeking needs of homeless people at public libraries?

### 6. Methodology and Methods

A qualitative methodology was used for this research, and specifically a phenomenological study. This is because it fits well with exploring the phenomenon of the information needs and behaviour of homeless people, and perceptions of library staff through an exploration of experience:

> “A phenomenological study is a study that attempts to understand people’s perceptions and perspectives relative to a particular situation. In other words, a phenomenological study tries to answer the question What is it like to experience such-and-such?” (Leedy and Ormerod, 2015, p. 273).

A phenomenological study also works well for this research because it allows for a sensitive, iterative, and meaningful approach to the specific phenomenon. As Hersberger has observed:

> “the term ‘homeless’ is problematic when we discuss information user groups. First of all, the homeless are not a homogeneous population” (Hersberger, 2005, p.199).

Lester has similarly written that: “Phenomenological methods are particularly effective at bringing to the fore the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives, and therefore at challenging structural or normative assumptions” (Lester, 1999, p.1). A phenomenological study can therefore combat any preconceived assumptions about homogeneous communities and experience.
By conducting extended interviews with carefully chosen small subject samples it is hoped that a better understanding is gained of the phenomenon and data collected will be used to add to the knowledge of how library policy, practice, and services could be developed and improved in order to enable the homeless to use public libraries more effectively.

This qualitative, phenomenological approach also incorporates Savolainen’s everyday life information seeking (ELIS) model. Savolainen’s concept uses Bourdieu’s theory of ‘habitus’ as a framework for understanding information seeking as an innate part of our daily practices (Savolainen, 1995). This relates particularly to non-work practices that contribute to an individual’s ‘way of life’ and ‘mastery of life’ (Savolainen, 1995, p. 259). This model is useful to incorporate because it helps with frame the way that homeless people seek information as part of their everyday lives.

6.1 Population and Sample

Phenomenology requires a smaller sample size than other types of research methodology because it is studying a specific group and is not making claims for a more general population (Denscombe, 2014, p. 102, Lester, 1999, p.3; Leedy & Ormond, 2015, p.273).

This can lead to nonprobability sampling, and perhaps convenience sampling, because there will be no way to guarantee that “each element of the population will be represented in the sample” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015, p.182).

Once the New Zealand region - that includes four cities and has a population of just over 500,000 people - was identified as suitable for this research project, non-probability, convenience sampling was used.

6.1.2 Librarian participants

Invitations for librarians to participate were emailed or delivered in-person to four public libraries in the selected region. Senior managers were focused on because they could respond to questions about policy. However, two front-line staff from one of the libraries were also asked to participate in order to gain a wider perspective.
Three of the four libraries agreed to participate and provided a participant at senior level. The fourth library responded by email that they were “not doing anything specific in this area – there are no policies per se” (Librarian C) and felt they could not contribute more through an interview. However, they were happy to respond to another question about an awareness of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions’ (IFLA) *IFLA Guidelines for Library Services to People Experiencing Homelessness*.

The invitations resulted in a total of seven librarian participants who were given the titles Librarian A through to Librarian G in order to maintain anonymity.

### 6.1.3 Homeless participants

It was initially difficult to identify homeless participants for this research. Therefore non-probability, convenience sampling became the method of selection after a staff member at one of the participating libraries was able to facilitate introductions to four homeless men who had used libraries throughout New Zealand and were currently using one or more of the libraries in the selected region.

As Denscombe has written:

> “It may prove exceedingly difficult to contact a sample selected through conventional probability sampling techniques. For example, research on drug addicts or the homeless would not lend itself to normal forms of probability sampling.” (Denscombe, 2014, p.33)

All four men agreed to be interviewed about their experiences looking for information at public libraries. In order to protect their anonymity they were given the titles Homeless Participant A through to Homeless Participant D.

### 6.2 Data Collection

Guided, semi-structured, one-on-one, face-to-face interviews were used to collect data. Interviews with homeless participants were held in small meeting rooms at a public library. Library staff were interviewed at their work places. This provided an appropriate, safe, familiar, and convenient location for all participants.
One interview of 30 – 70 minutes length was conducted with each participant. Homeless participants were offered food and a cup of tea, coffee, or water to drink as a gesture of manaakitanga. They were also offered the opportunity to have a support person or whānau member with them during the interview.

It was important to the researcher to conduct face-to-face interviews for two reasons. The first was the ability to create a rapport:

“Face-to-face interviews have the distinct advantage of enabling a researcher to establish rapport with potential participants” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015, p.160).

The second reason was the importance of ‘kanohi ki te kanohi’, or face-to-face communication in Te Ao Māori. This became especially important once it was established that all four homeless participants were of Māori descent, as is the researcher.

All interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Participants were given the opportunity to review the transcripts of their interviews. Participants were also given an information sheet, and consent form to sign and return before interviews commenced.

6.3 Data Analysis

Data collected in this research study were analysed using Creswell’s Data Analysis Spiral. As Leedy and Ormond write:

“Cresswell (2013) has described a data analysis spiral that, in our view, offers a helpful perspective on how qualitative data analysis can reasonably proceed” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015, p. 315).
This involved four steps moving from the raw data to the final report. The four steps were:

1. Organisation
2. Perusal
3. Classification
4. Synthesis

This was an iterative process until a final synthesis of conclusions was made.

6.4 Ethical Considerations

Victoria University of Wellington granted ethics approval for this research via the School of Information Management Human Ethics Committee (HEC). An information sheet and consent form was given to all participants. The information sheet guaranteed participants the right to anonymity, the right to withdraw from the study, and an offer to read the resulting paper.

As this research involved participants who could be in vulnerable positions because they are homeless, it was important to be “particularly sensitive to and thoughtful about potential harm” that might be caused (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015, p.120). All effort was made to create a safe, friendly, and informed interview process that was not intimidating, threatening, or exploitative.

6.5 Limitations

One limitation of this research is that the non-probability sampling process used to recruit participants could create issues in terms of bias and the degree to which the results can be generalised to other contexts. However, as a phenomenological study it is exploring the experiences of this particular group of participants in order to gain an understanding of their experience at public libraries in New Zealand and is not attempting to generalise for entire groups and institutions.

Another limitation is that an interview with one of the homeless participants was not as focused as the others and not all questions were asked. However, this participant still provided valuable insights into his experiences and did corroborate some of the experiences of the other homeless participants.
A further limitation is that described by Kelleher (2012) and discussed above in the literature review. Because the homeless participants had already established a rapport with a library staff member and were successfully using libraries on a daily basis they could be perceived as more “well-behaved” than those who do not, which could skew any research results (Kelleher, 2012).

7. Results

Results of the research are outlined below.

7.1 What information do homeless people look for and expect to find at public libraries?

7.1.1 Homeless participant responses

The homeless participants looked for different types of information in the public libraries they used. This included both recreational and practical, or necessary, information.

All read books while they were in the library. Two of the four participants regularly looked for books about history and historical information (Homeless Participants B and C). Two also sought out biographies (Homeless Participants A and B). One regularly browsed, and read, sport books and manga/graphic novels (Homeless Participant A).

“I read everything. I like sports books, biographies” (Homeless Participant A).

Three of the four participants had used Māori collections in the libraries they visited (Homeless Participants A, B, and C). These three had also looked for, or at, information related to whakapapa. One participant regularly looked for books about Māori topics as well as archaeology from around the world:

“I’ve been looking at archaeologists, because they’ve always got real life things, because I want to know where people come from, and how different people came together. So I’ll see, oh that’s interesting but that’s one view,
now I’ll see this other view. There’s such a lot to know…” (Homeless Participant C).

One of the participants looked for and used maps in the library (Homeless Participant B). This same participant had also used the library to access information about a board game he had seen Chinese New Zealanders playing in the library. He had found out the name of the game, the objectives, and its history.

Three of the four participants (Homeless Participants A, B, and D) said that using the WiFi in the library allowed them to search for both information to do with government agencies such as Work and Income at the Ministry of Social Development and current event news:

“… especially when you’re rough sleeping it’s good to catch up on stuff like news. You still want to keep in touch with the world” (Homeless Participant D).

Two participants specifically mentioned searching for, and watching, items on YouTube (Homeless Participants A and D), and one other participant said that he would often watch a movie while in the library (Homeless Participant B).

Only one participant had a library card and regularly borrowed items (Homeless Participant D).

7.1.2 Librarian participant responses

Three of the ten librarians interviewed (Librarians B, D, and F) said that it was hard to provide a definitive response regarding what information homeless people look for and expect to find at public libraries because it is often difficult to know who identifies as homeless among their patrons. One senior library manager pointed out that this made it hard to be “evidence based” (Librarian D).

A senior manager at another library responded that: “they’ve all had very different needs” (Librarian A).
When library staff could identify what information homeless people looked for and expected to find at public libraries they noted that it included newspapers and books to read (Librarians A and E), graphic novels (Librarians E and G), information about how to get jobs (Librarian G), and other unidentifiable information sought through access to the WiFi and Internet (Librarians A, B, D, and F).

7.2 How do homeless people look for information at public libraries?

7.2.1 Homeless participant responses

Three of the four homeless participants said that they used the free WiFi provided by libraries to look for information while at public libraries (Homeless Participants A, B, and D). This was usually on their cell phone. One mentioned the use of Google (Homeless Participant A) and two mentioned searching for things on YouTube (Homeless Participants A and D). All four participants had cell phones, and at least one also had a tablet (Homeless Participant B).

Two of the four participants (Homeless Participants B and D) had asked for help at a library information/help desk and felt comfortable doing this:

“They have one person who stays there all day and he gives out head phones and gives you information on how to get to what you’re wanting. So they just have one dedicated person who knows about computers. So you can just tell them what you are searching for, like jobs or something, and he’ll give you sites to go on to. That’s how I get my information” (Homeless Participant B).

One participant specified the use of the Dewey Decimal System (Homeless Participant C), and another the use of a library computer catalogue (Homeless Participant A). This participant also said he usually browsed the shelves to find recreational reading.

Three of the four participants noted that they found out about events in one of the libraries they used through announcements over an intercom system and that this was a useful way for them to be part of an audience or learn something new (Homeless Participants B, C, and D).
One participant said that he used many services at one of the two libraries he currently frequented:

“…there’s lots of different things there. There’s a music place you can go, and upstairs is all the research. Next to the café is where they have the computers. There’s exhibitions where you can choose what you watch too, like land marches and stuff. Other historical New Zealand things” (Homeless Participant B).

Three of the four participants had used fixed, desk-top computers to access information at the public libraries they visited (Homeless Participants A, B, and D) but preferred to use their own devices.

7.2.2 Librarian participant responses

As with the previous question, it was hard for library staff to be definitive about how homeless people look for information at public libraries because of the difficulty in identifying homeless patrons.

Four of the six librarians interviewed said that homeless people used the information/help desks at their libraries to access information (Librarians B, E, F, and G). However, it was noted by three librarians that homeless people would often establish a rapport with certain staff before beginning to ask for help (Librarians E, F, and G).

“Sometimes I think if they have established a rapport with someone, they might come and ask for help from that specific person. They might not do the same if there is a different librarian. We all have different personalities. I’m sure anybody would be happy to offer help but sometimes there is already a relationship” (Librarian F).

Two of the librarians specified that free WiFi was used by the homeless for information seeking (Librarians A and B). One said that clients used the paid Internet services at fixed desk-top computers in their library (Librarian F), while two others said that the free Internet service at fixed desk-top computers in their libraries were used for access to information (Librarians B and D).
7.3 How do staff at public libraries perceive the use of the libraries by the homeless: do they feel welcome?

This question was adapted during the interview process to one that was about whether library staff perceive that homeless patrons feel welcome in their libraries and are able to use the libraries to find information as easily as other patrons.

Four of the six librarians interviewed said that they felt that their libraries and colleagues were welcoming, supportive, and non-judgmental when dealing with homeless patrons (Librarians A, D, E, and F).

“*I think that’s something we do quite well as a profession actually, is that inclusiveness, (being) non-judgemental...everyone gets the same level of respect when they walk through that door. That’s one thing we are really firm on here*” (Librarian A).

“We all feel that we want everybody to feel welcome” (Librarian F).

Two librarians however felt that their colleagues were not always pleased to deal with the homeless (Librarians B and G) and that some staff thought that these patrons were looking at entertainment rather than ‘real’ information. One librarian perceived that his colleagues were making a judgment on what ‘information’ is and how libraries should be used (Librarian B).

“* (We are an) institution that is for anyone to use, and our primary purpose is to be a source of information and to give people access to information. It’s not our place to judge what information is important to people. And then I think there are other people who are a little bit more reserved and would really prefer that the information that you are here to access is information that we are here to protect and hold. So I think there is a mix of reactions*” (Librarian B).

“It’s a judgment - they think they (the homeless) are that way because of the choices they’ve made. They don’t realise that some of us don’t get choices” (Librarian G).
7.3.1 Do you (the homeless) feel welcome in public libraries and that the staff are friendly and there to help you?

Three of the four homeless participants said they felt welcome in public libraries and that staff were non-judgmental. The fourth participant was not asked this question.

In response to the question “What about the staff, are they nice and helpful?” Homeless Participant B replied: “Yes, they’re awesome”. He further explained that this had been his experience in libraries throughout New Zealand:

“Yeah, they’re all really good. When I was living in Auckland I was quiet scruffy, and I’d go waltzing up, and they didn’t judge me!” (Homeless Participant B).

7.4 What are the existing services, practices, or policies that are offered to the homeless demographic at public libraries?

None of the four libraries asked to participate in this research had existing services, practices, or policies related to homeless users.

“There is no specific policy, other than: ‘We are here for (people who live in this city)’. Our policy, is that as far as we are able, everyone in (this city) should be able to use the library. We don’t have a door charge for visitors to the city, they don’t have a fixed abode in the city either... Our policy is at a higher level. That we are here for you, we are open for business... The downside is that it is sometimes perceived as not doing much, because we don’t have a particular homeless policy. Our policy is that we open our arms” (Librarian D).

Similarly, none of the participating senior librarians/managers at the four libraries asked to participate were aware of, or were using, the 2017 International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions’ (IFLA) IFLA Guidelines for Library Services to People Experiencing Homelessness. However, all four libraries did say that now that they were aware of the guidelines they would find a copy and consider implementing any recommendations if they felt were appropriate for their institution.

It was noted by two of the librarians that many of the services they offered to all patrons could be, and probably were, used by homeless patrons. These included free
WiFi, free Internet public computers, and power points to charge cell phones (Librarians A and D).

Librarian D said that there were sensitivities involved when providing services to targeted groups:

“... even if we did choose to have events (targeted at the homeless), how would we check somebody to see if they were homeless? We’re not going to do that” (Librarian D).

Librarian D also pointed out that their library had, in the past, asked homeless patrons if they would like a book club for example, but that this was something those patrons had not wanted. She also explained that the library holds regular movie nights that all patrons are welcome to attend and that homeless patrons are more than welcome at events such as this which are always advertised in the library and announced over the library intercom.

7.4.1 Homeless participant perspectives on targeted services

Homeless Participant D, who is a regular user of Librarian D’s library, said that he did attend the movie nights at the library and liked the way they were free, and announced over the intercom so he knew when they were about to start.

Homeless Participant C also liked the use of the intercom, and the idea that it allowed people the choice to attend, rather than having an event that would see attendees labeled as ‘homeless’:

“Since I’ve been coming to the library I’ve noticed there’s been a lot of activities going on and it’s always on the intercom... and I believe that’s good enough, because you’re letting them know and it’s their decision if they want to come in” (Homeless Participant C).

When asked if they would like to see targeted services, such as those provided by Auckland City Libraries, at the libraries they regularly used two of the Homeless Participants said they would (Homeless Participants A and D). However, Homeless Participant C said he thought it was necessary to tailor services more appropriately
and specifically, with whakapapa and genealogy advice for example, so that they would truly engage and empower homeless patrons.

7.5 What barriers are there to homeless people finding the information they want or need at public libraries?

7.5.1 Homeless participant responses

Three of the four homeless participants did not think there were barriers to them finding information in the public libraries they used.

“They’ve got a good information thing, or I can just ask” (Homeless Participant B).

“It’s only a barrier if you make it yourself, you know?” (Homeless Participant D).

Homeless Participant C indicated that there was a barrier when trying to get homeless people to engage with library programmes, because as mentioned above, programmes on offer did not always appeal to the homeless.

7.5.2 Librarian participant responses

Three of the librarians interviewed said that needing a residential address to obtain a library card in order to borrow items could be seen as a barrier (Librarians A, D, and E). However, Librarian D noted that this could be overcome if a homeless person was able to use a social service’s address, such as a night shelter for example.

Fees, and paying for the Internet were seen as barriers by three of the librarians (Librarians D, F, and G), and two of the librarians felt that limited digital literacy could be a barrier for homeless people seeking information at public libraries (Librarians E and F).

Librarians B and G said that library staff could be barriers to homeless people being able to find the information they want or need.

“The librarians need to realise how intimidating they are. They are very intimidating. And all it takes is a smile, and a hello so that you acknowledge them as a person because often they are treated really rudely” (Librarian G).
“I suspect that some of the attitudes of staff can be a barrier. Whilst I think a lot of our staff are amazing I think that there’s probably some attitudes that throw up some barriers” (Librarian B).

7.6 How could services be developed and improved in order to better facilitate the information seeking needs of homeless people at public libraries?

7.6.1 Homeless participant responses

Two of the three homeless participants were happy with the services at the public libraries they used and said that they could not think of any improvements that would help them (Homeless Participants A and B).

Homeless Participant D said that if he could suggest an improvement it would be increased access to computers to make it easier for people to find information:

“Probably access to computers, not everyone has a phone to use the WiFi. Could help people organise. Otherwise, it’s just up to you to make the most of it for yourself” (Homeless Participant D).

Homeless Participant C was emphatic that specific services offering advice and help with whakapapa and genealogy would be the most beneficial improvement for all homeless people at public libraries:

“I reckon the main key is whakapapa, if you’re going to do something. Through whakapapa, whether they come or not it’s open to everybody. Not everybody knows their identity. To me, that would be the main building block, the foundation, whether they come or not, it’s starting. And if you got some homeless in there that are interested you use those people to influence the other people. So that way you aren’t looking for them, you don’t want to, it’s all set up. And I know it’s hard if lots of people don’t come but it’s starting. So to me, if you had whakapapa or genealogy, just a basic one then that’s not targeting homeless people it’s just open to everybody. To me, that would be a step for everybody who is homeless to come in, and you’re actually giving them something. And because they hang out with the rest of the homeless, hopefully they’ll start talking and then influence the others. Because I’ve
learnt that’s the main foundation – doesn’t matter if you are white, or black, or what, a lot of people have been taken away, or don’t know about it…but it gets them on the way to learning something” (Homeless Participant C).

When asked if they used the library for whakapapa or were interested in learning about, or discussing, their genealogy, the three other homeless participants responded positively.

7.6.2 Librarian participant responses

There were different responses from the librarians interviewed about how services could be developed and improved in order to better facilitate the information seeking needs of homeless people at public libraries.

Librarian D pointed out that their library had worked with social services to find out what homeless people wanted from the library:

“We did go down to (a social service) and actually say ‘how could we improve?’ and the suggestion at that time was whakapapa tutorials. That’s a long way from a book club, so we’ve focused on that... I think putting our resources into that kind of thing, looking at what could come next after our whakapapa service. The idea was that the resource would be librarians going out to (the social service). What they want next could be anything, like learning another language. For that we would say, here are all the resources the library has for that. So it might not be typical library stuff, it could be outreach. Just thinking of all the different types of homeless people, like the people at the night shelter is just one group. Others are in and out of possible homes. They all have different welfare needs. (We are) trying to make sure we cater to all these different subgroups of homeless” (Librarian D).

Librarian E observed that overseas research discusses setting up specific spaces in public libraries for homeless people to use, which could be an improvement. However, Librarian E also noted that “some of them don’t want others to know they’re homeless” so the idea of a specific area could be insensitive and unappealing.
A need for increased access to free Internet on public library computers was a suggested improvement from Librarian F who also recommended tailoring services to the homeless in specific communities as a way to improve overall information services for that demographic, and that this could include out reach.

Librarian G suggested that a shelf reserved for homeless patrons could be helpful when they were using items for information:

“Someone said something to me about a shelf. So they issue books and then they have a shelf for the homeless people to leave their books on. So they keep their items on that shelf, and it’s kept behind the desk, and they can just issue their stuff and leave it there, and then come back and take it to use later” (Librarian G).

The same librarian also suggested that enabling homeless people to have easier access to library cards was an improvement that should be made:

“I think it is setting it up where they can have a card and access, and then that is true belonging - they feel like they belong. They don’t need to hold the card on them, the card could be kept at the desk” (Librarian G).

8. Discussion

8.1 Lack of specific policies, practices, and services

The main finding in this research has been that despite the significant, and rising, homeless population in New Zealand, none of the four public libraries who participated had any policies, practices, or services in place that directly support the information needs of homeless people. This was despite their library services being used regularly by homeless patrons who were seeking information on an almost daily basis.

It was also surprising that none of the librarians interviewed were aware of the *IFLA Guidelines for Library Services to People Experiencing Homelessness* that have been under development since 2012 (p. 10).
IFLA explains that the guidelines are important for a number of reasons including their relationship to the United Nation’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015):

“The obligation to implement Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), assumed by political leaders worldwide, commenced on the first day of 2016. Although people experiencing homelessness are not explicitly mentioned in SDG, they are indirectly in their focus because homelessness is one of the least examined consequences of the poverty occurring on a global scale. ... Revitalizing global partnership is fundamental in the process of meeting these goals.

Libraries hold a significant place in this global partnership, as evidenced by examples of best practices of library services to people who are experiencing homelessness worldwide” (p. 12,13).

The IFLA guidelines are comprehensive and cover a wide range of topics. Appendix H of the guidelines is a checklist for developing library services to people experiencing homelessness. This checklist provides a quick reference for public libraries wishing to improve their services to homeless people and includes recommendations such as:

“Establish a library policy that respects the human rights of everyone to information and cultural participation” (p.124).

“Contact community agencies and NGOs that provide services to people experiencing homelessness to discuss needs they see and how the library might respond to these needs. Regularly attend their meetings and offer the library as a partner in their efforts to address homelessness in the community. (p.124).

“Enhance communication about existing services to current and potential library users who are experiencing homelessness”. (p.125).

Despite not being aware of the IFLA guidelines, all of the four senior manager librarians from the four public libraries who participated in the research said they
would seek them out and would implement any recommendations if they were appropriate.

8.2 Information seeking behaviour of homeless people

One of the purposes of this study was to fill the gap in research regarding the information seeking behaviour of homeless people in New Zealand. The results illustrate that these homeless people are using public libraries for much more than sleeping and staying warm. This confirms the research of Kelleher who found that libraries were not just a place to sleep:

“Many homeless people in central Michigan use libraries frequently. They most often read for entertainment and use the internet. Survey respondents tended to be appreciative of library services” (Kelleher, 2013, p.19).

This research also corroborates Kelleher’s findings that

“Of those respondents that use libraries, the majority (58.4 percent) like to use the library to read for entertainment. Other popular services include using the internet to look up information (38.1 percent), and using the internet to correspond with people (33.6 percent)” (Kelleher, 2013, p.25).

Similarly the findings in this research reflect those discussed by Skinner:

“The primary findings of this survey for the target population were as follows— 1. Public computer use was the top reason for using the public library. 2. Recreational programs were of primary interest including movies, gaming and reading. 3. Computer classes, job and life skill programs and book clubs were requested areas of programming. 4. Books, magazines and AV were all of interest” (Skinner, 2016, p. 5).

Unlike Markwei and Rasmussen who noted that libraries do not have a role in the lives of the homeless youth they surveyed, the participants interviewed for this research did see the library as playing a role in their everyday life information seeking behaviour (as explained by Savolainen’s ELS model). This is because using the library on a daily basis for information seeking - and recreational reading or viewing -
was part of their ‘habitus’ and an innate part of their daily practices (Savolainen, 1995). The use of public libraries by the homeless participants certainly reflected non-work practices that contribute to their ‘way of life’ and ‘mastery of life’ (Savolainen, 1995, p. 259).

8.3 WiFi and the Internet

Free WiFi and paid or free Internet were the most common ways the homeless participants in this research were satisfying their information needs, although all the participants also read a wide variety of hard copy books.

This indicates that the way public libraries - in the region that the research was taking place in - are currently supporting the information needs of their homeless patrons is by providing free WiFi and access to the Internet while maintaining a quality book collection.

8.4 Whakapapa, identity, and social cohesion

Amore has written that

“Our most recent national homelessness statistics are for 2013, when approximately 41,000 people, or one in 100 New Zealanders were identified as homeless. Of these, about a third, or 13,000 people were Māori... Māori are overrepresented in the homeless population: consistently the prevalence of homelessness among Māori compared with Europeans is 5:1” (Amore, 2016, p.7).

All four of the homeless participants in this research were of Māori descent and showed an interest in using the libraries they visited to learn about their whakapapa. One of the librarians interviewed also noted that in the past they had been told by a social agency that works with the region’s homeless on a daily basis that whakapapa was of interest and concern to their users:

“We did go down to (a social service) and actually say ‘how could we improve?’ and the suggestion at that time was whakapapa tutorials” (Librarian D).
Mead has written of the importance of whakapapa to Māori identity:

“... whakapapa is belonging. Without it an individual is outside looking in”
(Mead, 2016, p. 47).

Homeless Participant C emphasised that his experience had led him to believe that libraries had an important role to play in providing information related to learning whakapapa. He felt that this would help build identity and resilience and help homeless people who are ‘lost’ regain a sense of belonging. He also thought that all homeless New Zealanders could benefit from learning about their genealogy, not just Māori. This is borne out by the request from the social service to Librarian D’s library for whakapapa “tutorials” for its homeless patrons.

Homeless Participant C confirmed what McRae explains through a quote from Prytz Johansen explaining the interconnected world created by whakapapa:

“The whole cosmos of the Māori unfolds itself as a gigantic ‘kin’, in which heaven and earth are first parents of all beings and things, such as the sea, the sand on the beach, the wood, the birds, the man” (Johansen, in McRae, 2017, p. 50).

Therefore if social cohesion is a goal for New Zealand as evinced in Treasury’s 2017 Living Standards Framework, public libraries who support homeless users as they seek information about their whakapapa or genealogy are fighting “exclusion and marginalization” and creating “a sense of belonging” and offering homeless citizens an opportunity to learn while strengthening their identity.

Paying more attention to the information needs of Māori, who constitute a significant proportion of the homeless in New Zealand, would also allow public libraries to better serve this demographic. Szekely (1997) has provided a framework for this, and Hayes (2012) has explored a kaupapa Māori basis for biculturalism in libraries. Both of these studies explain that although Māori have the same ‘everyday’ information needs as the rest of the population, they do have unique needs that can be best served in a bicultural, kaupapa Māori setting.
The librarians interviewed for this project were trying to provide a quality information service to all their patrons including the homeless. They do at times, find “difficulty in negotiating the balance between the rights of the homeless and the rights of other library patrons” (Giesler, 2017, p. 189), as they seek to provide services that will add to the social cohesion of their community. For example:

“There is no specific policy, other than: ‘We are here for (people who live in this city)’. Our policy, is that as far as we are able, everyone in (this city) should be able to use the library” (Librarian D)

“He was the other extreme, in which he was incredibly smelly. Which was a problem for us. Every so often we would quietly have to say to him, ‘You can’t come back until you’ve cleaned up’... I think we’re pretty lenient here. You know, as long as they’re not ruining the enjoyment of the library for other people, then that’s fine...everyone gets the same level of respect when they walk through that door” (Librarian A).

9. Conclusion

In 2017 New Zealand had the highest rate of homelessness in the OECD and more than 40,000 people were experiencing homelessness. This study has focused on adding to the knowledge of how this significant and marginalised demographic use public libraries to meet their information needs and how library policy, practice, and services support those needs. It aims to inform public library practice so that policy and services could be developed and improved in order to enable the homeless to use public libraries more equitably and effectively.

Results from this study found that the homeless people who participated in the research use public libraries on a daily basis for a variety of information needs along with recreational reading and viewing. They mainly used the WiFi and Internet to search for information but also looked at books when they were curious about a topic. They felt welcome in the libraries they used and were happy to ask for help from librarians.
The librarians interviewed - who worked at the four libraries that participated in the research – felt that their libraries were on the whole, non-judgmental spaces that welcomed everybody and tried to meet the information needs of all patrons. None of the libraries had specific policies, practices, or services in place to support the information needs of homeless patrons however, the provision of free WiFi, Internet, quality collections, and friendly, empathetic staff are the ways that these public libraries are currently meeting the needs of this demographic. There was a tension between providing targeted services for the homeless and ensuring that the needs of all patrons were being met in an equitable manner.

Barriers were identified by the librarian participants in the form of fees, the need for a residential address to obtain a library card, and in the attitudes of some library staff, while the need for more computers in libraries was identified as a barrier by one of the homeless participants.

9.1 Implications
The findings of this study will be of interest to librarians and public libraries that have homeless patrons and want to develop improved services that more effectively meet their information needs.

The two main implications are:

1. the potential for public libraries to develop specific policies, practices, and services for the homeless in line with the IFLA guidelines so that equitable access to information is provided for the marginalised homeless demographic which is a significant proportion of New Zealand’s population; and
2. the potential for public libraries to provide services for the homeless, especially Māori, specific to identity and genealogy in order to strengthen identity and stimulate learning.

9.2 Further research
This research used nonprobability and convenience sampling in order to find out about the information needs of homeless people and how these needs are supported by public libraries in New Zealand. Because the sample of homeless participants was
identified through a library staff member, the results could be viewed as skewed towards people who already use libraries. Further research could examine the information seeking behaviours of homeless people who do not use public libraries. This would allow for a deeper understanding of the information needs of homeless people and identify services that public libraries could develop to meet those needs.

As discussed above, Māori constitute a disproportionately large number of the homeless in New Zealand. Future research could specifically examine the information needs of homeless Māori so that public libraries can better meet their needs.

Finally, in the future, comparative research could be done comparing a region such as Auckland which has programmes specifically aimed at the homeless, and other regions which do not have programmes and policies in place, in order to evaluate how different approaches work for both the homeless and the public libraries.
7. References

Accessed June 12, 2018 at:
http://www.tematapihi.org.nz/resources/2017/1/19/mori-homelessness-basic-statistics

Bunić, S. (2013). Libraries and the homeless: Experiences, challenges and
opportunities – socio- economic background of homelessness in Croatia,
doi.org/10.1108/00242531311328131

Retrieved 13 August 2017 from: http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/cities-grow-worldwide-so-do-numbers-homeless


Gaudet, F. (2013). What kind of services supply to the poor? A survey directed
toward homeless, *Library Review*, 62(1/2), 43-46,
https://doi.org/10.1108/00242531311328140


Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. Accessed 13 August 2017 from:
https://www.merriam-webster.com

https://doi.org/10.1108/00220411211209203


DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.11157/sites-vol13iss2id331

https://search-proquest-com.helicon.vuw.ac.nz/docview/57367359?accountid=14782


Te Aka Online Māori Dictionary. Accessed June 12, 2018 at:

http://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=whakapapa


http://dx.doi.org.helicon.vuw.ac.nz/10.1108/00242531111166692

8. Appendices

8.1 Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Research Project Title: How Public Libraries Support the Information Needs of Homeless People

Researcher: Louise Dowdell, School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington

As part of the completion of my Master of Information Studies, this study is designed to investigate and analyse how public libraries support the information needs of homeless people. Homeless and formerly homeless people in New Zealand will be interviewed to find out, in their own words, what their information needs are and how they perceive those needs are supported by public libraries. Library staff from New Zealand will also be interviewed to find out about their experiences and perspectives concerning the support of the information needs of the homeless at public libraries. The objective is to add to the knowledge of how homeless people use libraries and how library policy, practice, and services could be developed and improved in order to enable the homeless to use public libraries more effectively.

Most existing research examines the experience of the homeless in public libraries overseas and there has not been a significant amount of research undertaken on how the homeless use public libraries and their perception on how their information needs could be better supported. There is also little research that has been conducted in New Zealand. This study would help address this gap in knowledge and the lack of research in New Zealand. Victoria University requires, and has granted, approval from the School’s Human Ethics Committee.

I am inviting homeless and formerly homeless people, and library staff to participate in this research. Participants will be asked to take part in a 30 minute, individual, face to face interview. Participants will be offered the option of having an accompanying person, or whānau member with them during the interview. The interviews will take place in hired meeting rooms that are conveniently located for participants. Permission will be asked to record the interview, and a transcript of the interview will be sent to participants for checking.

Participation is voluntary, and you will not be identified personally in any written report produced as a result of this research, including possible publication in academic conferences and journals. All material collected will be kept confidential,
and will be viewed only by myself and my supervisor Dr Chern Li Liew. The research report will be submitted for marking to the School of Information Management, and subsequently deposited in the University Library. Should any participant wish to withdraw themselves (or any information they have provided) from the project, they may do so, without having to give reasons, by e-mailing dowdelloui@myvuw.ac.nz, or calling Louise Dowdell’s cellphone number 027 325 0846, by four weeks after the interview, and the data collected up to that point will be destroyed. All data collected from participants will be destroyed within two years after the completion of the project.

Participants who would like to receive a summary of the results of this research when it is completed will be contacted individually by telephone or email or through a nominated support person. A face-to-face meeting will also be offered so that participants can receive feedback personally.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me at dowdelloui@myvuw.ac.nz or telephone 027 325 0846, or you may contact my supervisor Dr Chern Li Liew, Director of Research Degrees Programme, School of Information Management, at chernli.liew@vuw.ac.nz or telephone 463-5213.

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the School of Information Management Human Ethics Committee Chair Dr Philip Calvert, email philip.calvert@vuw.ac.nz or telephone 04-4636629.

Louise Dowdell
8.2 Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Research Project Title: How Public Libraries Support the Information Needs of Homeless People

Researcher: Louise Dowdell, School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I may withdraw myself (or any information I have provided) from this project, without having to give reasons, by e-mailing dowdelloui@myvw.ac.nz, or calling Louise Dowdell’s cellphone number 027 325 0846, by four weeks after the interview.

I understand that any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and their supervisor, the published results will not use my name, or the name of any organisation I am employed by, and that no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me or the organisation I work for.

I understand that the data I provide will not be used for any other purpose or released to others.

I understand that, if this interview is audio recorded, the recording and transcripts of the interviews will be erased within two years after the conclusion of the project. Furthermore, I will have an opportunity to check the transcripts of the interview.

Please indicate (by ticking the boxes below) which of the following apply:

- [ ] I would like to receive a summary of the results of this research when it is completed.
- [ ] I agree to this interview being audio recorded.

Signed:

Name of participant:

Date:
8.3 Support Person/Whānau Confidentiality Agreement

Support Person/Whānau Confidentiality Agreement

Research project: How Public Libraries Support the Information Needs of Homeless People

Researcher: Louise Dowdell, School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington

☐ I have read the information sheet that has been sent to participants of this research project.

☐ I agree to treat the names of the participants and their responses as confidential.

Name: ________________________________

Signature: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________
Louise Dowdell

Course: INFO 580

Word Count: 9,318 not counting the Abstract, Acknowledgements, Table of Contents, References, and Appendices.