Merger and management

University of Rwanda libraries in a transitional context

Berthilde Uwamwezi
Merger and management: University of Rwanda libraries in a transitional context
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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Swedish School of Library and Information Science, University of Borås.

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ABSTRACT
With a focus on management of libraries, this study is set in the context of a merger of the University of Rwanda with multi-sites and campuses. The study explores how librarians, library directors and representatives for university management understand and conceive of the libraries in relation to the merger. It addresses questions concerning the participants' views on resource sharing as a potential strategy for managing libraries. Furthermore, the study reviews the challenges and opportunities as well as the enablers and constraints that the merger evokes on library work within the merged university. Qualitative methods in the form of semi-structured interviews, observations and document study were used to produce the empirical data.

The key findings indicate that there is a variation in the study participants' views and understandings of the libraries, the management of these, and resource sharing. This variation depends on where the respective participants are located in terms of positions in the organizational structure and geographical location. The study reveals that the tensions caused by the participants' various views on libraries and library management can be traced to and visible in the overall university structure. These tensions result from the centralized command and control management approach that largely is in play to govern the libraries. According to such an approach, the libraries are considered peripheral units of the university system. More specifically, these tensions emanated from two contradicting understandings of resource sharing. In the thesis, these two understandings are referred to as resource sharing as a strategy for dealing with abundance or as resource sharing as a strategy for dealing with scarcity. The study, furthermore, revealed that the merger process caused a problem of...
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disconnection between, on the one hand, the rhetoric about libraries and, on the other, the practices of library work and management at the libraries. The disconnection is manifested in management of libraries and the work taking place there. The situated practices at local libraries are enabled or constrained by the availability or the lack of necessary resources. The merger as a process and a strategy disturbs traditional existing practices at libraries, since it has not been negotiated as most participants expected it. Since the libraries were at different starting-points at the initiation of the merger, harmonization and modernization processes became challenging. The results show that it is necessary to remediate the disconnect problem through establishing a functional organizational structure in which decision-making power to a greater extent than what is the case is delegated to the colleges, campuses and libraries. That is, an organization where library matters are attended locally at the respective libraries. Such a change in the understandings of the role of the libraries within the university would be a way to refocus the library system’s central role in contributing to the university’s mission. This would mean to reconsider the necessary requirement for the UR libraries to becoming modern and provide adequate services to the community.

The study contributes to research that explore how libraries are managed in the context of a university merger where the library is not the key mover of the merger, but rather perceived as a by-product of the institutional merger. The study also contributes to research involving resource sharing as part of strategic discourse, particularly in the context of university mergers.

**Keywords:** University merger, resource sharing, library management, academic libraries, academic library merger, University of Rwanda, Rwanda, University of Rwanda libraries
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The Ph.D. journey is fascinating though challenging and tiring. The journey that started September 1st 2014 is now at its end with the present thesis. It was a long and hard journey but rewarding. I have learnt a lot from this wonderful life experience as a human and as a Ph.D. candidate. This thesis would have not been accomplished without the support from several people who deserve special thanks.

First, I thank the Almighty God who provided me with the opportunity, ability, and strength to continue my studies. His grace, righteousness and all his blessings in my life made me strong during different times. To Him be the glory forever.

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May the Almighty God bless you all!

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Borås, February 2020
Part I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Sometimes universities merge. Most university mergers aim at enhancing educational quality, institutional efficiency and resource sharing (Skodvin, 1999; Huang, 2000; Lang, 2003, Yang, 2015; Johnes & Tsionas, 2019). Usually, there are economic or political incentives involved. There is also evidence that mergers contribute to branding, visibility, identity construction and the reputation of a university (Geschwind, Melin & Wedlin, 2016). When universities merge, this has consequences for involved academic libraries. Consequently, two or more academic libraries are compelled to find ways to unite. This thesis is a study of such a merger of libraries with particular emphasis on how the process of coming together is guided by notions of resource sharing.

A sociocultural approach (e.g. Wertsch, 1998) is used to explore and analyze how notions of resource sharing between libraries enable or constrain library management within the new organizational entity consisting of previously autonomous institutions and libraries. The specific setting for this study is a multi-campus university in Rwanda.

Libraries are seen to play a major role in the development of advanced societies (e.g. Dolan, 2011). However, the development of library institutions follows broader trends within individual nations. The roles of libraries change in accordance with the needs of specific societies (Juchnevič, 2014) and libraries are even expected to contribute to their respective countries' social, economic and democratic development in various ways (e.g. Shera, 1976; Juchnevič, 2014; McHombu & Beukes-Amiss, 2015). In addition, academic libraries, as part of universities, are expected to be flexible enough to adapt to new trends in research policy and practices. When universities merge, so must their academic libraries. Such mergers affect the ways libraries and library resources are managed. Resources include a multitude of printed as well as online books and journals, IT resources, buildings, library staff and library leadership. For the library, the merger must proceed simultaneously with other processes of the University merger.
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Navigating the aggregated resources of several libraries therefore involves both opportunities and challenges.

When universities merge, it can be expected that all the different units involved are strategically questioned and to some extent reconfigured. For each unit, it can be questioned if the merger leads to improved efficiency and if there is a need to downsize staff or to actually expand the number of professionals employed. A study of academic libraries in the context of a larger university merger can therefore provide insights into how university leadership can rethink the mission of the library in the context of library management and its overall use of resources.

However, a library-centered perspective to library management is frequently not taken into consideration during such changes, despite dramatic effects on most services. Saarti and Juntunen (2011) have shown the value of involving libraries in the merger process from the very beginning, but historically, the library has seldom been a key mover in the merger of institutions (Moll, 2010). Rather, according to Mael (2014), library mergers are a consequence of, and a way of speeding up the results of their institutions’ merger. In such a situation, libraries have to adapt to existing time plans. Nevertheless, previous studies have shown that library mergers do not necessarily follow their institutions’ merger plans partly due to the complexity of library mergers and partly because challenges related to library management are often underestimated (Swanepoel, 2005; Mael, 2014). Consequently, university mergers could have serious consequences for library management and the ways in which resources are used.

Naturally, numerous functions are pulled together in a merger process. Some of the functions (e.g. those directly connected with finances and strategic management) are highly prioritized while others, including libraries, are less prioritized. However, the academic library should be viewed as a special case with specific problems that need to be respected. It is an integral part of the education system and helps universities and research institutions to achieve their missions by supporting research, learning and teaching. Thus, they also contribute directly and indirectly to the economic development of a country (e.g. Gregory, 2005; Alidousti, Nazari & Abbooyee Ardakan, 2008; Ojha & Tiwari, 2016). In a changing environment, academic libraries are also
required to contribute to bridging knowledge gaps (e.g. Patterson, 2009; Dolan, 2011). However, despite the complexity of the library with its various arrangements of resources and continual development, the library is often considered as low priority (Pinfield, Cox, & Rutter, 2017).

Before any given merger, autonomous libraries will have developed specific routines, services and scholarly resources in order to serve a specific segment of academic scholarship. As Jubb (2010) underscores, librarians develop various qualities in their services in order to meet the demands of their specific users as well as responding to global changes in education, scholarly publishing and information technology. In other words, before any given merger, librarians should already be involved in transformative processes as more and more services are being digitized. The need for such ongoing development of competences does not pause during the years that a merger proceeds. Corrall, Kennan, and Afzal (2013) emphasize that even if libraries and librarians respond differently to challenges, there is still a need for skills development in order to, for instance, proactively contribute to research evaluation in the universities. In addition, Cox (2018) sees the strategic planning of the library to align with the institutions’ goals, together with the reorganization and redefinition of roles of library staff, as ways of demonstrating the value of libraries in the institutions’ struggle to build identity, compete and internationalize.

Academic libraries contribute substantially to the achievement of university’s missions in different ways. These include acquiring and retaining students as well as providing integrated support (Hagel, Horn, Owen, & Currie, 2012). Libraries are seen to play a crucial role in supporting the teaching, learning and research missions of the universities (Jubb, 2010, p. 150) and in contributing to the research achievements of universities (RLUK, 2011). Several academic libraries also manage the research data of their institutions (Tenopir, et al., 2017). Libraries and librarians are seen as key collaborators in enabling researchers and institutions to uphold high quality research (cf. Nolin, 2013, p. 517). Moreover, there is a strong relationship between research performance and university library use through support from libraries and librarians (Noh, 2012, p. 125-126) and through research support services to the community (Schoombee & Raju, 2013).
Both Black (2004) and Castells (2010) have emphasized the contribution of libraries to knowledge economy development. Moreover, academic and research libraries contribute to the research performance of individuals and institutions (e.g. RLUK, 2011; Ojha & Tiwari, 2016). Building on the research briefly reviewed here, it could be argued that mergers can strengthen library resources. However, the economic value is not always recognized by senior managers and researchers active at the university as noted by the Research Libraries in UK (RLUK, 2011), and not least by the general public and other stakeholders.

There is therefore a risk that when various units are jockeying for position and struggling against downsizing in the context of the merger, the arguments for a strong academic library may not be sufficiently heard or understood. Previous studies (e.g. Alidousti et al., 2008; Ogba, 2014) have shown that libraries tend to be given insufficient resources given the broad responsibilities and importance of their work. Moreover, allocated library funds are increasingly swallowed by the continuous increase of costs for information material (Giesecke, 2012; Maceviciute, 2014). Research Library UK (2011, p. 60) identifies what can be called a systemic problem, that academic libraries seen as “a real tangible physical expression of knowledge [and] a cornerstone of research environment”, of value to research and researchers, are underfunded. This systemic problem involves a disconnection between, on the one hand, visions, high ideals and appreciation of the library and, on the other hand, the pragmatics of budgetary allocation. This disconnect problem becomes important in the context of the merger when there is a fundamental reorientation of budgetary and resource allocation, which can also lead to a scarcity of different resources in libraries. The disconnection between visionary and budgetary ideals can be decreased but even extended.

1.1 Resource sharing as a merger strategy

Resource sharing is a common term used among the University of Rwanda (UR) stakeholders and was used in the production of empirical data for this thesis. In Library and Information Science (LIS), the term resources is mainly used in connection to (1) library collection including printed and computer/media-based collections usually known
as electronic information materials (e-resources), (2) materials, facilities and equipment, technologies, finances, and (3) human resources including competences.

There are numerous terms used for resource sharing as far as academic libraries are concerned in the LIS literature. Some of the terms are narrower in scope while others are broader. According to Bailey-Hainer, Beaubien, Posner, and Simpson (2014), different forms of collaboration and interlending systems/models between libraries in terms of sharing resources change the role and definition of resource sharing, which initially is concerned about the lending of books between libraries.

The new forms of collaboration include interlibrary loan through consortia, joint library use, a union catalogue, shared libraries, interlending and so on. These new models of partnerships coupled with technological developments and the evolving roles of academic libraries position resource sharing as a dynamic strategy for libraries (Bailey-Hainer et al., 2014, p. 7). This makes the term resource sharing more complex in scope and definition. More about this is presented in the third chapter, Literature Review.

There is a substantial literature on resource sharing within LIS. Libraries across the world (public, special and academic) share different resources through various arrangements. The most well-known practice of resource sharing is the interlibrary loan, which according to Gilmer (1994), has existed since the nineteenth century and has been evolving throughout the history of libraries and civilizations. The previous research on resource sharing in general has mainly focused on interlibrary lending and the sharing of buildings/facilities (e.g. Edwards, 1994), the importance and challenges of resource sharing in general (e.g. Jalloh, 1999) and the importance of information sharing between libraries (e.g. Geronimo & Aragon, 2005). Studies on resource sharing in academic libraries have primarily focused on the challenges of interlibrary loans (e.g. Beaubien, Kuehn, Smolow, & Ward, 2006), the advantages of collaboration between libraries (e.g. Al-Harrasi & Al-Aufi, 2012) and the role of ICT in resource sharing (Ruan & Qiang, 2013). The existing literature is still limited to information sharing and only on a few aspects of resource sharing. The main focus is on barriers
and challenges to effective resource sharing (e.g. Anasi & Hussaini, 2012), success factors (e.g. Alidousti et al., 2008) and the effectiveness of resource sharing through consortia (e.g. Chalhoub, 2017), as well as the importance of resource sharing to users and universities (e.g. Geronimo & Aragon, 2005). Briefly, the literature focuses on resource sharing as a way of overcoming challenges in accessing resources in different ways. However, there is no literature on resource sharing as a way of managing libraries.

Obviously, most discussions on resource sharing within LIS concern the improvement of services to users most commonly concerning collections and media. However, the concept takes on somewhat different meanings in the context of a complex merger. What will be discussed in this thesis is resource sharing as a merger strategy to manage libraries. This means that various people involved in the merging of academic libraries use the concept as a way of understanding what needs to be done in libraries in the merger process.

In this thesis, the term “resource sharing” is therefore an overly broad strategic concept used by various stakeholders to make sense of library services in the context of the merger. A crucial point to be made here is that various kinds of resources at individual libraries are connected together through years of developed services. Resource sharing used as a strategic concept in the context of a merger is to a certain extent disruptive. Conventions of library specific leadership and staff working with in-house collections within the bounds of a physical library are now challenged. Leadership must now tie together many libraries. Staff must now be seen as interlibrary resources. The various materials of many libraries are to be merged and efficiently shared.

In the context of this thesis, resource sharing is not used as a theoretical concept. Rather, it is a concept found to be central in the empirical data in connection with stakeholders attempting to understand and renegotiate the meaning of the academic library and to develop practices in connection with the merger. It should, furthermore, be highlighted that the concept of “resource sharing” also can denote the actual practice of sharing resources.
It is thus both a strategic concept, in accordance with what has been outlined above, and a term used for referring to various activities comprising the sharing of resources of different kinds.

For practical purposes, a distinction in this text is made between the two concepts “library management”, referring to library-based activities, and “resource sharing”, a strategic concept used by stakeholders to make sense of what needs to be done in the context of the merger. My understanding of resource sharing is related to ways of managing libraries in order to attain quality service in the context of the merger. However, a close description of what resource sharing can be in practice is provided in Chapter 6.

1.2 Academic library services within the university mergers

Most previous studies on university mergers focused on the effects of mergers on academic services, especially quality of teaching and research, student recruitment and staff development (e.g. Fourie, 1999; Goldman, 2012), as well as on strategic management connected to the merger (e.g. Arnolds, Lillah, & Stofile, 2013). Empirical studies on mergers’ impact on academic libraries focused mainly on general challenges and benefits in voluntary mergers of university libraries (Muhonen, Nygrén, & Saarti, 2011; Rozum & Brassaw, 2013; Juntunen, Muhonen, Nygrén, & Saarti, 2013). Reflections on potential challenges and perspectives for libraries have also been noted, e.g. Huang (2000).

However, there are few studies of academic libraries in developing countries, especially on the effects of mergers on library management and resource sharing in the African context. Some examples include studies of library mergers in South African universities. The focus in these studies is on the merger process, its implications for both libraries and library staff and possible outcomes for libraries (e.g. Swanepoel, 2004a; Swanepoel, 2004b; Swanepoel, 2005). There is also a focus on the role of leadership and change management. For instance, Moll (2010) investigated conditions for success in the merger of geographically distant libraries, especially regarding collections and the integration of staff. Du Plessis and Mabunda (2016) researched change
management in a decentralized library that resulted from a merger. The focus in their study was on the use and management of new technology (or Information technology system) by the library for contributing to the strategic goals of many developing countries, such as Rwanda, to become a knowledge economy.

It must be emphasized that regardless of mergers, academic libraries and universities evolve in dynamic environments (Moropa, 2010) dominated by digital transformations, which have changed the roles and services of libraries (Sandhu, 2018). The changing environment of higher education, the influence of technology on open access and global economic uncertainty bring challenges and opportunities to the academic libraries (Weaver, 2013; Dang, 2017). Hence, academic libraries have to cross traditional boundaries in order to survive and to maintain their role within their institutions in order to respond to growing interests, arising out of the revolutionary changes experienced by their users (Melling & Weaver, 2013; Delaney & Bates, 2015).

Regarding digital transformation, Borrego and Anglada (2018, p. 1) noted that “the transition from print to digital information has transformed the role of academic libraries, which have had to redefine themselves as intermediaries and partners in the learning and research processes”. However, as libraries are neither economically independent nor administratively powerful units (Moropa, 2010; Dempsey & Malpas, 2018) they have to negotiate and redefine their identity in order to remain relevant within the institutions (Cox & Pinfield, 2014; Cox, 2018).

Internationalization and competition between universities to attract and retain students in a cost effective manner and thereby to build their reputations (Weaver, 2013) have created new challenges and consequences for libraries. Moreover, libraries, are seen to play a significant role in contributing to the reputation of their institutions by supporting student learning in their efforts to internationalise (e.g. Jolly, 2006; Core & Hordon, 2010; Sandhu, 2018). Thus, libraries are required to extend their role in order to help universities to reach their goals within a constantly evolving environment. In these changes affecting universities, with high expectations from all sides, libraries are expected to demonstrate their value (Oakleaf, 2010; Noaman,
Ragab, Madbouly, Khedra, & Fayoumi, 2017; Cox, 2018). There are various reasons why libraries have to change in order to remain efficient and relevant in their universities. Corrall et al. (2013) mention the diversification of media and technological development as well as cuts in economies as aspects of a changing library service environment. Moreover, Du Plessis and Mabunda (2016) emphasize the need for libraries to effectively manage changes in order to remain relevant in a competitive knowledge economy whereby universities aspire to become research-led and world-class universities.

Obviously, despite dynamism of societal development, libraries have to prove and maintain their role of supporting the university in achieving its strategies, missions and goals. According to Jubb (2010), libraries have to develop new ways of collaboration and cooperation in order to enhance efficiency and respond to the changing interests of the users, especially in difficult situations of economic fluctuation. Delaney and Bates (2015) see the embedded roles of academic libraries in research and teaching as a way to strengthen their presence in their institutions.

1.3 The merger of the University of Rwanda (2013- )

African universities often suffer from insufficient funds. This leads to a general lack of ICT and infrastructure, insufficient staffing and scarcity of various types of resources. Despite this situation, libraries are expected to deliver high quality services to meet the institution’s mission (Kargbo, 2002) and the country’s development agenda (Kargbo, 2011). The academic libraries are the intellectual hub of academia (Dang, 2017), “reservoirs for knowledge” (Du Plessis & Mabunda, 2016, p. 56) which help universities to spread knowledge to society. Libraries in the knowledge economy have to make a difference in order to meet the requirements and expectations linked to the nation’s ambitions.

The Government of Rwanda has expressed the Rwandan ambition to become a modern knowledge-based economy nation (Rwanda Vision 2020, 2012). To reach this ambition, one of the strategies includes the Rwandan long-term development agenda, Vision 2020. The Vision 2020 was adopted by the Government of Rwanda in 2000 and was revised in 2012 as a long-term development policy with the primary objective of “transforming Rwanda into a middle-income country by
the year 2020 [...] and into a knowledge-based society” in the long run (Rwanda Vision 2020, 2012, p. 6).

In connection to this Rwandan ambition to become a knowledge-based economy, seven former public institutions of higher education (HEIs) and universities were pulled together into the University of Rwanda in order to strengthen it as the one single public university in the country. The University of Rwanda was designed to meet the economic, social and cultural needs of the country (MINEDUC, 2013, p. 3). Moreover, the “establishment of the University of Rwanda aims to be a catalyst in driving forward quality reforms by improving quality assurance, consolidating the skills and expertise of academic staff, creating centres of excellence for teaching and research, and improving the utilisation of resources and facilities” (MINEDUC, 2013, p. 26). As summarized in a report by Farquhar and Morgan (2013)\(^1\), the University of Rwanda (UR) was created with an “overarching aim to transform the public higher education system to improve the quality and efficiency of teaching and learning, and to create a world-class university [...] and building high-level research capacity” (p. 152). Furthermore, according to the report by the expert consultant (Davenport, 2011, p. 1) it is stated that the University of Rwanda (UR) was created to meet the challenges related to “the difficulty of sharing resources across the merged institutions”. In this regard, library services are in transition whereby the sharing of resources is a practice emerging from — and is part of — the merger process.

Aula and Tienari (2011, p. 7) argue that the rhetoric of “becoming a world-class university acts as an imaginary incentive” to justify and legitimize further actions for change. Moreover, this rhetoric is used together with other terms such as "research incentive" or "research-led" by universities wanting to profile themselves as unique organizations (Stensaker, 2015, p. 112). However, a university does not become “world class” by simply calling itself one (Aula & Tienari, 2011, p. 21). Rather, there are some criteria, which according to Salmi (2009) include, but are not limited to, “abundant resources to offer a rich learning environment and to conduct advanced research” (p. 20-21).

\(^1\) Consultants commissioned to advise the Task Force during the pre-merger stage in 2013 before the promulgation of the law establishing the University of Rwanda.
Drawing on the above statement, if the UR libraries are to meet the expectations generated by the merger, there is a need for them to provide a vibrant library information infrastructure for research. Through fair utilization, management and/or the development of existing resources, the involved libraries can contribute both to the achievement of the UR vision by becoming a top-modern library and to the ambition of the country to becoming a knowledge-based nation. Libraries are expected to achieve this by facilitating access to information to researchers, students as well as to society.

The idea of conducting research on resource sharing and library management between academic libraries came from my own experience as a librarian in academic libraries. Even before the UR merger, I encountered numerous situations unfavorable to resource sharing within and outside my workplace. In most of cases, problems stemmed from the organization’s limited understanding of the role of academic libraries for the community, a lack of a functional structure in library management and clear guidelines about library management and resource sharing. The start of this Ph.D. project coincided with the initial stage of the merger of both earlier individual higher education institutions (HEIs) and libraries. As a staff member in one of the UR campuses, I had firsthand experience of the situation. The colleges, including the libraries, were at varying levels of institutional development. Resource allocation and mobilization was uneven and the geographically distant libraries were not all well developed in the use of information technology. The major challenge, however, was how the disparities would be accommodated and managed under one administrative structure now called ‘the University of Rwanda’ and how resources would be allocated between libraries in order to have a positive effect on the achievement of the university’s goals. It is against this background that as someone who was both active within the merged institutions and an employee of the UR who was well informed about the contribution of modern libraries to their institutions, I embarked on this research project.

The expected changes in the practices regarding how libraries and resources are managed in the context of a merger are what make this
study important. There are expectations connected to the merger and there are understandings about resource sharing as a strategy – and as a practice – to solve the problems emerging from the merger. Thus, the libraries are expected by different stakeholders to change their habits and working routines in order to adapt to and accommodate changes resulting from the merger, including the expectations of a modern university. However, as the merger is an ongoing process, there are different situated practices in different campuses and libraries to consider. By interviewing those involved, their statements about how resources are used can make sense when situated within the context of the merger. Thus, a sociocultural approach, which considers both the context and individuals in attempts to understand human action (Wertsch, 1994) will help to elucidate resource sharing as a strategy and as a situated practice shaped, constrained and enabled, by various means in the UR merger process.

1.4 Aim and research questions

This thesis aims to shed light on how resources are shared within the UR libraries and how resource sharing as a merger strategy influences library management in the context of the merger of the University of Rwanda, which was both decided upon and started in 2013. This merger, like most other mergers globally, affected common services at institutional level and various challenges arose affecting the working traditions of libraries. With that understanding, this study intends to explore how libraries are managed, the resources understood to be available and how they are managed in the context of the merger. The study also intends to shed light on the challenges and opportunities to libraries occasioned by the merger. In brief, the overarching research question that the study strives to answer is how the vision of the merger as well as budgetary aspects and provisions are related to the practices at libraries and the understanding of the UR library management.

The study draws on features of sociocultural theory to inform the research process. Therefore, library management and resource sharing are investigated in relation to different material and social situations. Resource sharing is discussed differently, in separate places, social situations and with a variety of agendas by managers and by librarians. Various activities related to resource sharing take place within localized
value systems that aim at enhancing the contributions of the libraries to the university’s mission in the complex multi-campus infrastructure of the University of Rwanda. Concentrating on library management and resource sharing also become important in dealing with the disconnect problem mentioned in the opening of the introduction, i.e. the separation of visionary and budgetary plans for the library. The study explores and analyzes empirical data produced together with participants at the managerial and library levels of the UR using interviews, observations and the analysis of documents collected from libraries. The historical background of the libraries is also considered.

The term practice as used in this thesis refers to various entangled activities enacted in relation to library services with the aim of meeting the interests of different categories of users. In brief, these activities shape what staff actually do in the form of library work in order to achieve the goals of the library. These activities are characterized by interactions between people, objects and the environment.

The following research questions guide the study:

1. How is resource sharing talked about and understood by various categories of staff at the UR in the context of the merger?
2. What practices related to resource sharing and library management can be identified at the different libraries of the University of Rwanda?
3. What are the potential problems and challenges to library management in the context of the merger and how do they relate to the various visions and steering documents?
4. What solutions do management and library staff suggest for addressing potential problems and challenges to libraries?

The first question involves describing participants’ different understandings of the merger and resource sharing through interviews. It is as an exploratory question, which will help to address the other research questions. The second question focuses on identifying activities at the UR libraries through interviews with library staff and observations in libraries. The third research question discusses the understandings of resource sharing and related challenges through interviews and analysis of visionary documents (library mission/vision,
the UR vision/mission, and library organizational structure/chart, library policy documents and the UR strategic documents). The fourth and last question concerns the potential solutions suggested to address challenges and problems connected to the merger as identified by the participants in the study.

The specific characteristics of the object of the study involve library management and the ways resources are used in the context of:

- a merger of geographically separated campuses and their libraries into one university;
- the merger of the libraries (within the university merger) as it unfolds; and
- a post-conflict country attempting to break with the past, to build trust in institutions by learning from both neighboring and developed countries in the shift from an 80% agricultural-based economy to a knowledge-based economy/modern society.

The setting of this study is further elaborated on in Chapter 2, the section on Rwandan context.

1.5 Mergers

Mergers are quite common in the context of large corporations aiming to increase mass and influence. Therefore, there is a substantial business and management oriented literature on the motives, processes, problems and outcomes of organizational mergers (e.g. Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991; Trautwein, 2006; Lin, Tai, Hsu, & Yang, 2016). The blending of two or more organizational bodies must be understood as involving both strategic approaches and the development of practical arrangements for driving and guiding the merger process (Buono, 2003; Muller, 2006, Arnolds et al., 2013). Many of the specific challenges that arise during the process are difficult to predict as they are dominated by the scale and complexity of creating a new organizational structure (Kotter, 2007; Sulkowski, Wozniak, & Seliga, 2019a). Tensions and stress are part of change management (Muller, 2006) and occur in all the various phases: strategy, execution and management implementation (Jayaram, 2003).
The concept of merger is subject to various interpretations and classifications, based on the organizational outcomes or on who initiates the merger. The common term in the business oriented literature is ‘Merger and Acquisitions’ (M&A) which refers to two distinct types of merger found in both business-driven and academic sectors (Harman & Harman, 2003). Based on the criteria of organizational outcomes, Harman and Harman (2003) distinguish two types of mergers. The first type, referred to as a consolidation, is when two or more institutions come together to form a new larger entity. This is similar to the kind of merger that has resulted in University of Rwanda. In this case, all the merged institutions cease to exist and a new one emerges with a new name. The second type, referred to as “a ‘take-over’ or acquisition, of a smaller institution by a larger institution” is when the former institution fades away and the new institution prospers under the name of the latter (p. 32). The initiations of merger are either voluntary or forced (involuntary) mergers. While voluntary mergers occur when institutions agree between themselves to come together, the government usually takes the lead in initiating forced (or involuntary) mergers. In the case of the UR, it was an involuntary merger initiated by the government.

There are also classifications based on the type and size of merged institutions. Ljungberg and McKelvey (2015) and Liu, Patton and Kenney (2018) distinguish between horizontal and vertical mergers as well as between the pros and cons connected to expected outcomes. As the authors note, a horizontal merger refers to a union between two or more universities/HEIs with similar academic profiles while a vertical merger involves institutions with different academic profiles. According to this classification, the merger of the UR is more or less of the vertical kind.

The term merger is used together with other concepts as well. According to Lang (2002), the term merger is used interchangeably with terms such as consortia and acquisition and other forms of inter-institutional combinations such as federations. Although these concepts are different they have some similarities which will not be evaluated here. However, some literature on consortia arrangement (as a form of resource sharing) is presented in Chapter 3.
In the academic setting, according to Ahmadvand, Heidari, Hosseini, and Majdzadeh (2012, p. 736) the merger is “the combination of two or more separate institutions into a single new organizational entity, in which control rests with a single governing body and a single chief executive body, and whereby all assets, liabilities, and responsibilities of the former institutions are transferred to the single new institution”. While the merger has been a tradition in for-profit organizations as a way of increasing profits, the move for mergers in universities is also claimed to bring advantages and opportunities for the institutions involved. Muller (2006) noted that the merging of universities or libraries could be a long and delicate process, aiming at bringing about changes in the rebuilding of either entity.

The mergers of universities have also changed over time. Harman and Harman (2008) note the move from the mergers of departments or faculties within a university to strategic mergers initiated by governments. The aim in the latter case is often to address the problems of the fragmentation of small institutions and to create large and stronger “degree-awarding institutions” (p. 102). Harman and Harman (2008, p. 99) argue that “strategic mergers” are formal combinations or amalgamations of higher education institutions with the aim of enhancing competitive advantage or merging for ‘mutual growth’.

Historically, university mergers are initiated for various reasons and expectations. As Mael (2014) notes, mergers are currently initiated as ways to be competitive in the academic marketplace. There are political justifications that mergers increase international visibility (Docampo, Egret, & Cram, 2015). Moreover, it has also been suggested that mergers increase both international rankings (Docampo et al., 2015) and research performance in the universities to some extent (Liu et al., 2018). Furthermore, university mergers are seen as ways of implementing public policy, promoting various sorts of rankings, rationalizing science and education networks and strengthening the economies of scale (Seliga, Sułkowski, & Wozniak, 2019, p. 559). This new trend (Czarniawska, 2019) in mergers reveals a strong connection between mergers and resource sharing in universities as presented in the literature review chapter.
The type of the merger is not necessarily significant for libraries; what is more important is how the conditions for success are handled (Moll, 2010). The UR merger coincides with a consolidation as described above and it is important to note that it was an involuntary merger initiated by the government. However, considering the similarities and differences between the merged institutions and the outcomes of the merger, which is a “stand-alone university” — to use Ljungberg and McKelvey’s (2015, p. 59) term — it is difficult to clearly categorize the UR merger as a horizontal or a vertical merger as described above. This makes the merger a complex case, which presents major challenges and opportunities for supporting services such as libraries. Mergers are discussed more thoroughly in the literature review in Chapter 3.

1.6 The thesis’ location in LIS

The thesis’ main contribution is to the research field of academic librarianship, especially to the subfield of library management within LIS. Through previous literature, LIS is recognized as a discipline with different subfields and foci (e.g. Äström, 2010; Buckland, 2012; Bawden & Robinson, 2012). These subfields overlap in such a way that it is difficult to separate them. They include but are not limited to information management, information literacy, library management, knowledge management, information organization, information society studies, human-computer interaction, bibliometrics, information seeking and information retrieval (Bawden & Robinson, 2012, p. 5). Even though these subfields are identified, they all hang together to form the LIS discipline. Accordingly, considering the object of the present study within a sociocultural theoretical framework, the thesis combines aspects of organization studies and library management within the specific domain of academic library services.

Different research studies have discussed and scrutinized the identity of LIS in terms of scope, core and relations to other disciplines (e.g. Nolin, 2007; Buckland, 2012). LIS is recognized as dispersed, which makes it difficult to trace its boundaries. The subfield of Library Management is connected to the field of Information Management (IM) (Bawden & Robinson, 2012, p. 252) where the connection is constituted by a view of information as an organizational resource like other “resources such as people, equipment and capital” (Detlor, 2010, p. 104), which need to be properly managed and used. According to Wilson (2005), the library
plays a major role in handling different aspects pertaining to IM such as acquisition, organization, storage, retrieval, circulation of information and information materials. Information and information materials are also considered in this study as resources but they do not constitute its focus nor does the study focus on information management as such. Rather information materials are considered as one of the resources in this study. Thus, the aim of the thesis is to contribute to the subfield of library management.

Library management is a heterogeneous research subfield of LIS. According to Bawden and Robinson (2012, p. 259), library management includes aspects such as information technology, human resources, information use, automation, data protection and copyright, performance measurement, outsourcing, marketing, cultural diversity, teamwork and leadership. However, in previous research, the research area of library management is not recognized as the core of LIS. The term information (and or service/center) is often added to become ‘library and information management’ or ‘information center management’ or the term ‘systems’ is added to become ‘library management systems’, thus referring to information technology (Bawden & Robinson, 2012). For instance, in a content analysis of journal articles on the evolution of LIS from 1965 to 2005 by Tuomaala, Järvelin, and Vakkari (2014, p. 1451), most of the aspects noted by Bawden and Robinson are scattered and classified under different topic headings with many under ‘Library and Information Service activities’. The article even includes other aspects not listed by Bawden and Robinson (2012) such as buildings and facilities, user education, circulation and interlibrary loan and administration or planning.

1.7 Limitations of the study

The limitations of the study include those related to the research setting and reflexivity of the researcher and those related to the research approach which was exploratory (both collection and analysis of data), and finally those in connection to the generalizability of aspects of this study which is a case study in Rwanda in the local context of the merger.

The study was conducted in a particularly early stage of an ongoing merger. Naturally, things change as the process proceeds. There are limitations linked to studying a complex and dynamic institution, a
university engaged in a process of restructuration. There is a possibility that some information was missed due to time and other constraints such as the different sites of the libraries involved and changes in the positions of the library staff and other participants during the merger process.

1.8 Relevance and contribution of the study

The study through elucidating the impact of a merger on library management and resource sharing in the context of the UR merger contributes to:

- In-depth understanding of issues of library and resource management in the wake of the merger;
- Shed light on the enablers, constraints, challenges and opportunities connected to the merger;
- Understandings of practices at the UR libraries and potential challenges and possible solutions, which may contribute to the development of new practices at the UR libraries;
- Understandings of the roles of libraries and library staff within a university in a time of change;
- Developing strategies for improving the UR library management systems and resource sharing;
- Raise awareness of the potential role of libraries, librarians and librarianship in Rwandan society. This study is the first of its kind in Rwanda and I hope it will help to inform both stakeholders and Rwandan society of the role of libraries in the development of society. In this way, the study may align with previous research in efforts to counter public misconceptions of academic libraries and librarians (e.g. Sare, Bales & Neville, 2012).

Although this study investigates a very specific form of library merger, the results can be of relevance for other academic libraries also involved in the processes of mergers. The study was conducted in the UR, which after the merger is the only national public university and is spread over a multi-campus setting. Future research might build on this study to further develop understandings of mergers and resource sharing in (or between) different institutions of various sizes and financial/business
orientations.

1.9 Thesis structure

The thesis consists of eleven chapters. Chapter one, this introduction, describes and motivates the research problem and the research questions guiding the study. It situates the study in the field of library management of Library and Information Science. It also presents the limitations and relevance of the study.

In the second chapter, the background to the study is presented, i.e. the Rwandan context, the UR merger and the UR libraries. The Rwandan context is presented in terms of geographical location in the world, its history, and political and economic agenda, according to ‘Vision 2020’, which is a national development policy for all sectors. The educational system and the situation of libraries and librarianship are also described. The UR merger process is briefly described and related to experiences of previous mergers between other institutions and libraries.

The third chapter presents a literature review relevant to the study. Studies include those on mergers in general and on HEIs and libraries and on resource sharing between academic libraries. One section is devoted to studies in the context of developing countries and Africa. The literature also includes research on understandings of academic libraries in universities and on the roles and competences of academic librarians. The chapter concludes with identification of the features in the literature that will be of importance to bring further and discuss in the discussion.

The fourth chapter outlines and discusses the theoretical framework used to elucidate the complex phenomenon of resource sharing. The chapter is introduced with my interpretation of the sociocultural perspective grounded in social collectivist metatheory and on which the study relies. The situatedness of library work and resource sharing, as well as the notion of mediational means and the concept of community of practice are introduced, described and discussed. The chapter is summarized by showing how the key concepts are used in the thesis to create a theoretical framework through which the results are generated, analyzed and discussed.
Chapter Five describes the research design and the methods used to produce and analyze data. The qualitative approach taken, including interviews as the main method for data production supplemented by observations and documents study is described. The process of analysis, which is based on a qualitative content approach with a thematic analysis procedure, is described. Ethical considerations are presented and related to the different research methods together with a reflection on the role of the researcher through the research process. The chapter ends by describing how credibility and trustworthiness were maintained throughout the research process.

Chapter Six, Seven, Eight and Nine coherently present the results of the study illustrating the different foci and perspectives following the research questions. Chapter six outlines different understandings of the merger and resource sharing. Two contradictory views of the merger (i.e. optimism and pessimism) are discussed and it is demonstrated how they inform understandings of resource sharing as strategy (abundance) and as something enacted in practice (scarcity) (research question 1).

Chapter Seven identifies practices at different libraries and review the mediational means used (research question 2). This chapter deals with the geographical distance problem of merging the different libraries and the impact of the merger on library services.

Chapter Eight deals with challenges connected to managing libraries and resources at a distance and relates to how resource sharing is portrayed in the visions and other documents (research question 3).

Chapter Nine outlines the potential solutions in connection to the identified challenges to library management and resource sharing as they are formulated by the participants (research question 4).

Chapter 10 forms the discussion of the results in the light of the research questions, the theoretical perspective and previous literature.

Chapter 11 constitutes the conclusions drawn from the study and discusses different aspects of the thesis, including reflections on the theoretical framework, its contribution to the field of LIS research, to academic libraries in general and in particular to the UR libraries. The chapter concludes with suggestions for possible future research.
2 Background: Rwanda, the UR and libraries

2.1 Introduction and overview

In order to facilitate the reading and understanding of this thesis, this chapter sets out to present and describe the Rwandan setting in which the study is conducted. The introductory part of the chapter is devoted to the positioning of the study in the Rwandan political agenda. The chapter consists of a general presentation and description of Rwanda and includes accounts of its geographical location and history, its economy and national educational context. The chapter also outlines a brief history of libraries and the education of librarians in Rwanda and of the University of Rwanda’s merger within the national development policy, "Vision 2020”. The chapter ends in a description of the UR context and the structure of libraries.

2.2 The study within the Rwandan development and political agenda

This study is set in an unfolding merger of libraries within a major merger of geographically separate universities. It is conducted in a library environment dominated by collections of printed library resources. This does not necessarily imply the absence of digital resources but rather a mixture of both types of resources used differently at different libraries depending on the availability of appropriate equipment and the expertise of the staff. Through the merger, the UR is bringing together formerly disparate institutions and their libraries, a variety of human and material resources and ways of working. On the one hand, advantages are evident, but on the other hand, problems arise that have to be solved in connection with library management.

Moreover, this study is aligned with the Rwandan long-term development agenda, Vision 2020. This vision was adopted by the Government of Rwanda in 2000 with “a primary objective of transforming Rwanda into a middle-income country by the year 2020 and transforming Rwanda into a knowledge-based society in the long
run” (Rwanda Vision 2020, 2012, p. 6). In relation to this vision, Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategies (EDPRS) were initiated in order to establish a framework for sector priorities. During ten years of EDPRS phases I and II, a particular focus was on the development of education for young people as education was recognized as a priority for the development of Rwanda (MINEDUC, 2003). Vision 2020 formulates Rwandan aspirations for the future of their country and society. It offers broad guidelines towards the development of Rwanda. It summarizes in terms of six pillars and three cross-cutting areas the key priorities for the development of Rwanda (Rwanda Vision 2020, 2012, pp. 9-18) as follows:

- **Good governance and a capable state**: In this pillar Rwanda envisions becoming “a modern, united and prosperous nation founded on the positive values of its culture” (Rwanda Vision 2020, 2012, p. 9); a nation open to the world, where people share the same vision for the future and ready to contribute to social cohesion, equity and equality of opportunity. The government is also eager to ensure good governance, which includes accountability, transparency and efficiency in deploying scarce resources;

- **Human resource development and a knowledge-based economy** to improve general welfare of the population and education in order to build a productive and efficient workforce, which is considered (by the government) to be the foundation of a knowledge-based economy;

- **Private sector-led development**: implies the involvement of private sector entrepreneurial services as catalyst in the development of the country;

- **Infrastructure development**: the aim is to develop infrastructure (transport, energy, waste management, communication and ICT, water and urban development) in order to reduce the costs of doing business in Rwanda and hence attract more investors;

- **Productive high value and market oriented agriculture** for the improvement of agriculture through transformational policies in order to move towards a modern and more productive agriculture; and

- **Regional and international economic integration**: for keeping an open-liberal trade regime, reducing barriers to trade and setting up
policies encouraging investment.

The cross-cutting areas are:

- **Gender equality**: for improvement and adaptation of laws on gender in order to encourage female involvement in all sectors and domains of socio-economic development;
- **Protection of environment and sustainable natural resource management**: policies to mitigate the negative impact of climate change and environment on economic growth sectors;
- **Science and technology including ICT**: significant investment in training scientists and technicians to facilitate the transition to a knowledge-based economy and also incorporating the use of ICT in all development sectors.

All the pillars and crosscutting areas are connected to one another and together formulate ambitions of Rwandan politics. The establishment of the University of Rwanda in 2013 was in line with this vision, particularly through the second of the six pillars that relates to “human resource development and a knowledge-based economy” (Rwanda Vision 2020, 2012, p. 9). The same pillar is central to the development of the six other pillars. Rwanda not only “considers its population as its fundamental resource and banks on it for its future development […], but is also aware that the investment needed for the development of the secondary and tertiary sectors will not be effective without a suitably skilled labor force” (Rwanda Vision 2020, 2012, p. 11).

After aligning the study in this long term Rwandan vision, in the following section a background to the study including the context of the country, the university and its libraries that serves as case for the study is presented.

### 2.3 Rwandan context

Commonly named the 'land of a thousand hills' with reference to its mountains and geographical landscape, the Republic of Rwanda is situated in central Africa at the geographical coordinates of 2S (South latitude) and 30E (East longitude). It borders with Uganda to the north, Tanzania to the east, Burundi to the south and the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west. It covers a total area of 26 338 km² of which 24
210 km² of land area and 2,120 km² of water and swamps.

Figure 1: Map of Rwanda

Source:https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/rwanda-admin-map.htm

Statistics from the fourth census of Rwandan population and housing carried out in 2012 (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR), 2014, pp.1-18) show that Rwanda has a population of over 10.5 million people with an average of 415 inhabitants per square kilometer. Moreover, the population in 2015 was estimated as reaching 11.3 million or a density of 445 inhabitants per km². The level of literacy was 65% among the population aged 15 and above. Kinyarwanda, English and French are the official languages where Kinyarwanda is predominant with only 6% literacy in both French and English (NISR, 2014). Kiswahili was added as an official language in April 2017 (Tabaro, 2019).
2.3.1 Economy
The main activity is agriculture with more than 70% of the population living as farmers. The main crops include banana, potatoes, beans, sweet potatoes, maize and cassava. Cash crops include coffee, tea and flowers. Other sectors include industry and services. According to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, services and industry contribute most to the national GDP (Gross Domestic Product) (MINECOFIN, 2013). Overall, Rwanda’s economy is 90% dependent on subsistence agriculture. The major exports of Rwanda are coffee, tea, minerals (tin, cassiterite, and wolframite) and pyrethrum (MINECOFIN, 2014).

2.3.2 History
The history of Rwanda has been marked by social, political and administrative change, in the shift from a monarchy to the current republican leadership through a colonial period (Randall, 2016). During the pre-colonial and colonial periods (17th century through 20th century), Rwanda was ruled by a centralized monarchy through a succession of kings from one clan (Randall, 2016). The 1885 Berlin conference on Africa placed Rwanda and Burundi under German sovereignty and it was ruled through the king until the end of the Second World War (Lemarchand, 1970; Philpot, 2013). In 1899, Rwanda became a German colony until 1919 when Belgium took over until the eve of independence in 1961. Rwanda became an independent republic in 1962. After accession to independence, Rwanda entered into a period of development in all domains including administration and education, among others. Throughout history, Rwanda has been involved in wars and conflicts mainly concerning territory expansion, internal conflicts and tribal strife that lead eventually to the 1994 genocide. Rwanda was decimated by more than 800,000 or 20 percent of the population (Jefremovas, 2000) and 30 percent fled to neighboring countries. The history of Rwanda – or of any country- affects its development in various ways. As shown in the results of this study, the historical context of the University of Rwanda affected how it and its libraries were developed.
2.3.3 Education system

The Rwandan education system has developed throughout the history and administration of Rwanda. During the colonial period, missionaries initiated and sustained education at all levels (Rugengande, 2008; Masengesho, 2012). The first schools and institutions of higher education were Grand Seminaries created by the Roman Catholic Church specifically to train men for priesthood. Few other secondary schools and universities were created after independence. In this regard, the National University of Rwanda (NUR) was created in 1964 as the first university and others were established later. In the 1980s, the education system was composed of a mixture of private and public institutions with diversified study disciplines (Rugengande, 2008). After 1994, the surge and diversification of private and public schools continued both at secondary and tertiary levels. English as a medium of teaching progressively replaced French mainly in order to integrate former Rwandan exiles from English speaking countries and it was promoted as a medium of instruction at the expense of other languages in 2008 (MINEDUC, 2008).

Regarding higher learning institutions, six public institutions of higher education were created after 1994. They include the Higher Institute of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry (ISAE) created in 1989, Kigali Health Institute (KHI) created in 1996, Kigali Institute of Science and Technology (KIST) created in 1998, Kigali Institute of Education (KIE) created in 1999, the School of Finance and Banking (SFB) started in 2003, and Umutara Polytechnic Higher Institute (UP) was created in 2008. Private institutions were also created as an alternative solution for candidates who were not accepted at the public institutions (Masengesho, 2012).

Education is the responsibility of the Ministry of education. Two main agencies assist the Ministry of Education in its mission. These are the Rwanda Education Board (REB), which is in charge of education development and the Higher Education Council (HEC), which is in charge of quality assurance and program accreditation. The current structure of the education system consists of four main levels: pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary education. Primary and secondary education is compulsory and forms the ‘twelve year basic education’ referred to as 12YBE from year one of primary until senior
sixth year (see figure 2). There is an emphasis on technical and vocational education and training (TVET) at both secondary and higher education levels. It is possible to choose between academic options and technical or vocational fields (MINEDUC, 2013). The results (aggregate) from the national O-Level examinations (three years after primary school) determine whether a candidate continues to technical or senior secondary education.

Higher education consists of public and private universities as well as other higher learning institutions such as polytechnics. The statistics from the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC, 2018) shows that in 2018 Rwanda had 28 private and two public HEIs. The public HEIs include the University of Rwanda and the Institute of Legal Practice and Development (ILPD).

Education is delivered through accredited academic programs in public and private higher learning institutions. Both private and public institutions follow the guidelines from the Ministry of Education through the two agencies mentioned above. There are also decentralized education units at district level. Figure 2 illustrates the education levels and the corresponding certificates and degrees awarded at each level from primary to the tertiary level excluding adult literacy education.
This section described the Rwandan education system, which does not include any program for library and information science except a program in information systems that is computer science oriented. In order to contextualize the study as far as libraries and librarians are concerned, a brief history of libraries and librarianship in Rwanda is presented in section 2.3.5.

2.3.4 Political-administrative organisation
Rwanda is divided into five provinces: Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western, and the City of Kigali which is the capital. Rwanda is governed through decentralized entities from the smallest entity, a “village”, upwards to provinces through the cells, sectors and districts. Local government authorities are elected in their respective villages, cells and sectors while the President of the Republic, according to the law, nominates the governors of provinces. Politically, Rwanda in principle subscribes to a multiparty system of government following a Presidential Republic model. There are three administrative arms of
Government, i.e. the legislative, executive and the judiciary. Legislative power is the mandate of the parliament, which is composed of two chambers, namely the senate and the chamber of deputies. Executive power is vested in the President of the Republic and the cabinet of ministers. The judicial is vested in the judiciary which is composed of ordinary courts and specialized courts (The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda of 2003 revised in 2015, 2015).

2.3.5 The history of libraries and the education of librarians in Rwanda

Libraries and librarianship have been peripheral in most instances. The education of librarians has been an overlooked area (Olaka, 2008; 2009). According to Olaka (2008), education in library and information science before 1994 was only possible through intergovernmental cooperation scholarships. France, Belgium and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) offered most scholarships. There were also some scholarships in Canada and Senegal. Most students were trained in the management of archives. Altogether, ten people are recognized to have been trained through this program (Olaka, 2008). The lack of retention policy and attractive salaries led to the problem of “brain drain” whereby only two people continued to work in Rwanda while others worked in non-library related positions in the countries where they had been trained, mainly in Europe (Olaka, 2008, p. 298).

The department of library and information science was founded in the former Kigali Institute of Education in 2001 (current College of Education). It was closed in 2009 after having trained around 200 two-year diploma holders in librarianship. The reasons for the closing of the department was the lack of both qualified educational staff and support from the central administration (Olaka, 2008). After this period, those interested in library and information science enrolled in bachelors and master’s programs in other countries including Senegal, Kenya and Uganda to get their degrees (Olaka, 2008). Education was either distance-based or face-to-face learning programs. While some of the students were self-sponsored, others were sponsored by their institutions or collaborating institutions. The former National University of Rwanda, for instance, sponsored their personnel through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) from 2002 onwards. By means of internal funds, the former School of
Finance and Banking also sponsored its library personnel to upgrade their education level.

Regarding academic libraries, each of the private and public institutions had its own library exclusively for its community.

Even if the government of Rwanda is committed to educating all citizens, not all Rwandans have had access to education in the past. Rwandan society and most African civilizations have been characterized by oral traditions and the absence of a reading culture. Hence, Rwandan people have accessed a long-standing oral tradition that was transmitted from one generation to another (Vansina, 2004; MINISPOC, 2016). Thus, the history of libraries in Rwanda is recent and dates back to the 1970s. Scholarly contributions are limited. The French Embassy played a role in establishing the first public libraries in Rwanda in 1970s (Olaka, 2009). The center for cultural exchange (Centre d’Echanges Culturels Franco-Rwandais) ran libraries in Kigali, Gisenyi and Butare (current Huye) until 1994. The two libraries in Gisenyi and Huye were handed over to the local administrative government, which did not make use of them and transferred their collections to branches of the former National University of Rwanda (NUR) in Huye and Musanze (Olaka, 2009). In November 2006, the government of Rwanda decided to close the French Embassy and other French related businesses (Nkusi, 2006). It is in this aftermath that the library in Kigali was forced to close as a consequence of this interruption in diplomatic relations between Rwanda and France (Olaka, 2009; Dupaquier, 2014). Thereafter, the building was completely demolished in 2014 (Dupaquier, 2014; Boisselet, 2014).

In addition to the demolition of this public library, the national library initiated in 1989 was not institutionalized until late 2016. The Ministry in charge of sports and culture, the legal administrative authority for libraries and cultural heritage institutions, acknowledged the non-existence of a national library in the following statement: “if we take into account what mission such institution must fulfill, we realize that the National Library has not and does not exist, apart from its name” (MINISPOC, 2016, p. 4). According to MINISPOC (2016), the main reason for the non-existence of a national library is “the lack of rules and regulations and other legislative texts governing the creation, the
A part from the non-existing national library, public libraries are also scarce. The only library recognized as an entity that fulfills the requirements of a public library is Kigali Public Library (KPL) created in 2012. At the time of its creation, it also accommodated the collection of the National Library, which was relocated two years later to a more convenient place in Kigali city after the public library was handed over to a private organization.

In this section, the socio-economic and political background of Rwanda was presented. This context, which steered the evolution of merged institutions, is still significant for the UR and its libraries which are presented and described in the following sections.

2.4 The University of Rwanda

The University of Rwanda was established in 2013. The project of merging previous public HEIs started in 2011. As the merger is a process, the description of the UR in this study covers the period from its creation in 2013 until the end of 2016, i.e. it does not follow the steps in the merger process. The merger process was expected to be in midst of its implementation phase by the end of 2016 after two years of trial or pre-merger.

UR was established in 2013 as a result of merging seven former public higher educational institutions (HEIs) to a single public university. The government of Rwanda regarded the merger as one of the strategies in achieving the objectives of the Rwanda Vision 2020 and the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) presented earlier on. From the UR Statement and concept (University of Rwanda, n.d., n.p.), “the main purpose of creating this national institution is to enhance the quality of Rwanda’s higher education provision, while achieving economies of scale and efficiency in operation. It is expected to become a leading African university”. The UR is expected to contribute to the development of Rwanda through research activities and in providing skilled and educated workers. According to its mission, “The UR will support the development of Rwanda by discovering and advancing knowledge, and being committed to the
highest standards of academic excellence, where students are prepared for lives of service, and leadership, transforming communities through finding solutions” (University of Rwanda, 2016c, p. 5). As the only public university, the UR is envisaged to ensure the quality of higher education, i.e. improve quality and efficiency of teaching and learning and improve coordination between existing public institutions. The UR was designed to meet the economic, social and cultural needs of the country (MINEDUC, 2013, p. 3).

Even though seven institutions were merged, each institution does not have a corresponding college in the new organization. The UR is composed of six colleges: the College of Arts and Social Sciences (CASS); the College of Business and Economics (CBE); the College of Agriculture, Animal Sciences and Veterinary Medicine (CAVM); the College of Science and Technology (CST), the College of Education (CE) and the College of Medicine and Health Sciences (CMHS). According to the law establishing the UR, the Board of Governors is its governing and decision-making organ (Law n° 71/2013, section 2, article 11 §1).

The Chancellor is the titular head of the UR while the Vice-Chancellor is the chief executive officer. The Vice-chancellor is assisted by three Deputy Vice-Chancellors (DVCs), and six Principals of Colleges. The three Deputy Vice Chancellors preside over Institutional Development and Partnerships (DVC-IAP), Academic Affairs and Research (DVC-AAR), and Administration and Finance (DVC-AF). It is important to note that only two DVCs were operational by the time of data production in 2015 and 2016. However, the number of DVCs increased from three to four in 2017 by separating administration and finance responsibilities. Each of the six colleges is constituted by different schools and departments located in different campuses around the country. Colleges have crosscutting programs in the different campuses. During the fieldwork in 2016, the UR had 15 campuses altogether as illustrated in the figure 3.
Figure 3: Geographical overview of the UR colleges and campuses (in 2015)

As illustrated in figure 3, the University of Rwanda headquarters and five campuses (of 15) are located in Kigali, the capital city. Others are located in provinces outside Kigali, and the nearest (Musanze) is situated at a driving distance of 93 kilometers away. The challenge concerning geographical distance between campuses is further compounded by insufficient infrastructure. The 93 km between Kigali and Musanze is a two-hour car drive. Similarly, driving from Kigali to the institution (campus) farthest away (Rusizi) takes six hours.

In connection to its vision and mission, the University of Rwanda intends to be known for its learner-centered and evidence-driven approaches to teaching, learning, research and its contribution to national development. Thus, it needs to increase the production of high quality relevant research, “the objective of the UR management is to bring the University among the top 10 ranked universities in East Africa by 2020” (University of Rwanda, 2016c). Furthermore, the management recognizes that “there is a huge potential for the University to achieve its objective of being a research led university in a reasonably short period and indeed be among the best ranked
universities in Africa and the world” (University of Rwanda, 2014, p.1). Through student-centered learning and its mission to become a research-led university, the UR envisions to Rwanda’s and the region’s economic development.

Within the UR merger, similar units of the institutions/colleges are expected to work together as one unit under the centralized management of the University of Rwanda. Given the Rwandan political aspiration to become a developed country, the UR is expected to play a key role in achieving this ambition. The merger was set as a means for the government to restructure the public sector and thus overcome shortcomings (cf. section on the UR merger process) of the old system. It could be seen as a good opportunity to reposition the higher education sector in order to meet national development and global challenges. Following the Rwandan ambition, the University of Rwanda’s vision is “to be a leading University that develops highly enterprising graduates prepared and dedicated to building a more just and sustainable society locally, nationally and globally, with appropriate innovations that advance quality of life” (University of Rwanda, 2016c, p. 5). In order to achieve the vision, the UR set strategies such as the Staff Development Plan 2014 - 2024 which stipulates that “capacity building is one of the strategies to be implemented for staff to acquire, especially, doctoral degrees and engage in impactful research” (University of Rwanda, n.d). Crucially, it is stipulated that all academic staff are to have doctoral degrees.

The mergers may not be as easy to accomplish as the visions and missions seem to assume. According to Skodvin (1999), in both forced and voluntary mergers, the emphasis is on gaining something for the involved institutions, even if expected or unexpected challenges arise. In the following section, the merger process is briefly presented.

2.4.1 The UR merger process

This section is based on two reports on the merger process, which were produced in 2011\(^2\) and 2013. As stated in one of the appendices to the final report by Farquhar and Morgan, the Advisors to the UR’s

\(^2\) Davenport P. (2011). Towards a University of Rwanda: report to the Minister of Education of Rwanda (unpublished report). This document is an advisory tool. However, it has influenced or has been a key document in the decisions to merge.
transition Task Force, “the overarching aim of establishing the UR is to transform the public higher education system to improve the quality and efficiency of teaching and learning, and to create a world-class university” (Farquhar & Morgan, 2013, p. 157).

Furthermore, in the report by the Consultant-expert in education contacted by the Ministry of Education, Davenport (2011, p. 1) states, “the key element in the restructuring the higher learning education in Rwanda is cost effectiveness”. This was motivated by a will to overcome perceived (by various groups and individuals whom the consultant met) problems and shortcomings in the education system at that time (2011). These problems, as summarized by the consultant-expert, include but are not limited to:

- The difficulty of sharing resources across institutions;
- Poor coordination among institutions;
- The proliferation of programs, often for budgetary reasons and outside an institution’s mandate;
- Slow ministry or government response to innovative proposals;
- Ministry involvement in too many decisions;
- Wide variations in the quality of programs and institutions;
- Obstacles to providing incentives for teachers and senior administrators within the Civil Service structure.

The project to merge seven public HEIs into the UR was discussed in the National Leadership Retreat in February 2011. Thereafter, in May, the Minister of Education contacted an expert in education (Dr. Paul Davenport) as consultant on the project.

**Pre-merger**

The pre-merger period run from June 2011 until September 2013, the date of publication of the law establishing the UR. During the pre-merger key activities were planned step by step as noted in the report

- June–July 2011: Meetings between the Expert, Rectors of former institutions and various stakeholders (teachers and students representatives, representatives of government and private sector).
- August 2011: A group of economics teachers from former institutions submitted a cost analysis report to the Ministry of Education.

According to the report, no activities could be traced in 2012. However, in May 2013, strategic advisors were recruited to the UR Task Force. They held various meetings and produced their first report in September 2013. The advisors were to provide strategic advice and technical expertise to the Task Force on key issues concerning the merger. They were to "ensure that there is a clear linkage in terms of quality and design between the strategic goals of the UR; the set of tasks to be performed by the Task Force; key expected deliverables and the roadmap for establishing the UR" (Farquhar & Morgan, 2013, p. 153).

The advisors conducted several meetings with different groups, produced monthly reports and a final report with recommendations. Based on their experience in the pre-merger period, they recommended the establishment of a clear communication plan for a smooth and successful transition period.

In September 2013: the law establishing the UR and its implementation was promulgated. This coincided with and marked the merger kick-off as the law went into immediate effect.

In December 2013, a Prime Minister’s Order determined how the UR would be supervised, its organization, functions and responsibilities of its organs.

**Transition period**: A two-year transition period was planned from 2013 to 2015 (Farquhar and Morgan, 2013, p. 110). The merger process and important dates can be summarized in the following timeline that I established from analyzing the two reports.

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3 However, a timeline is not detailed in the report although considered by its author (p. 2) to provide a framework for creating the UR.
the private sector).
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4 Academic Without Borders Canada (A.W.B.C). Strategic Advisors to the University of Rwanda (Transition) Task Force.
Figure 4 covers some important dates in the merger process starting with the 2011 leadership retreat where the idea of the merger was initiated until the completion of the expected transition period in 2015. As advisory documents, the reports do not provide any further information on the merger process. Different groups of people were invited to different meetings during the merger process. These meetings are not included in the figure for legibility reasons. However, I noticed that no library representative attended the meetings or even participated in any of the groups that were formed.

Considering the types of mergers described earlier on (Harman & Harman 2003), the case of the UR is more complex for two reasons. First, the merged institutions were neither similar in size nor in teaching programs, so it is problematic to consider it as a consolidation. Second, it is neither an acquisition nor a take-over since none of the former institutions has taken the lead over others nor have they maintained their legal status.

### 2.4.2 The institutions being merged

The institutions merged were different in terms of size, development level, experience, teaching orientations and programs. Of seven institutions, one was internationally recognized as a university, i.e. the National University of Rwanda (NUR) while others could be characterized as technical and vocational institutions of higher education (HEIs). The institutions were different in scope in terms of
academic disciplines and organizational management. However, there were overlaps and duplications of both academic disciplines and programs and that therefore required harmonization and restructuration during the merger process.

Duplicate programs created a more complex situation where similar programs are currently located in different campuses. The size and educational mandate or orientation of an institution’s programs determine investment in infrastructure and library resources (such as buildings, ICTs, collections and staff) as presented in the following section.

2.5 Libraries being merged

The University of Rwanda expressed the ambition to develop a modern library in order to support academic achievement in research, learning and teaching. Reporting on research and academic initiatives, the UR directorate of communications and public relations (University of Rwanda, 2014) states that the “library has been restructured to ensure harmonized services and equitable access to facilities across the UR. There will be one library with campus branches that are interconnected through the IT network” (p. 2). Consequently, the merger of institutions led to the merger of libraries, which were expected to work together under as one coordinated unit. As shown in figure 3, campuses and colleges are located nationwide. Before the merger, each of them was independent including making partnerships with other institutions at national and international level and in the management of their own libraries. As the institutions were different, libraries were different in many aspects, i.e. buildings, facilities and equipment, personnel, collections, users, administrative autonomy and work strategies.

Regarding library buildings, most campuses were based on classrooms and lacked facilities that could serve the purpose of a library. Thus, equipment such as computers as well as the location of the library in relation to the institutions were dissatisfactory in terms of the aspirations of the UR.

The qualifications of library staff were also in accordance with the types of education programs being offered by the institutions. Most institutions (six of seven) provided education only to a bachelors’
degree and therefore required only a diploma in librarianship or qualifications in disciplines other than librarianship as an employment requirement.

Most library collections consisted of printed books. Although libraries had electronic resources they were barely used due to inconsistent or the lack of ICT infrastructure. The working conditions of each library were specific to the teaching and learning environment of each institution. Each library struggled to use its limited collection resources to exclusively meet its users’ needs. In addition, there were no arrangements to manage resource sharing between libraries. This is evidenced in library policies where it can be seen that only one library permitted interlibrary loan in its policy. However, it is almost impossible to share resources if no one else is willing to cooperate.

2.5.1 The role of partnership in the development of the UR libraries

Certainly, each institution had partners before the merger. However, it is worth noting that the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) was the UR’s major partner after the merger. Through the UR-Sweden Program for Research, Higher Education and Institutional Advancement, the contribution of SIDA upgraded the development of the UR libraries. The partnership with SIDA started in 2002 with the former National University of Rwanda (NUR). Cooperation with the UR is part of a bilateral collaboration between Rwanda and Sweden whereby Sweden through SIDA contributes to the development of Rwanda in different sectors including research and education carried out at the UR. This collaboration with the UR covers various domains where each domain or subprogram collaborates with one or more Swedish universities.

The partnering institutions to libraries (at the time of fieldwork for data production) are the Swedish School of Library and Information Science at the University of Borås (SSLIS) and Blekinge Technology Institute (BTH). Cooperation in the library subprogram consists not only of short courses and training for staff but has also contributed to noticeable results in the master and Ph.D. programs (University of Rwanda, 2016b). By 2018 the library sub-program counted nine LIS master graduates (from African Universities), four students enrolled at SSLIS
in their distance learning programs and two Ph.D. candidates who were enrolled respectively in 2014 and 2016 (UR-Sweden programme, Library Sub-Program, unpublished report, 2019).

Cooperation with libraries includes organizational support. In this regard, much has recently (in 2018) been achieved, such as the establishment of the UR library website, the creation of the UR repository and the formalization of an organizational structure and division into work areas led by functional committees within the UR libraries.

Moreover, SIDA contributes to collection development and ICT equipment. By 2018, the acquisition of equipment included a Server for X-ref software, scanners, laptops, desktops, thin clients, the security system (CCTV camera system and 3MD), and the barcode labels, UPS, tablets and E-Z proxy to remotely access e-resources. The development of library collections includes subscriptions to 48 databases and acquisition of about 3500 books of which half was still under procurement and tender process (from the report on results of previous SIDA funding 2002-2018, unpublished).

2.5.2 Organizational structure of the UR libraries

Regarding the organizational structure, libraries are aligned under the responsibilities of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs and Research. The libraries are campus-based where some campuses have branch libraries in different campuses. The complexity of organization therefore increases when libraries are located at different workplaces and have a variation in academic disciplines to account for. These branch libraries had previously been departmental and faculty libraries or belonged to the former HEIs before the merger. Currently, some of these libraries are serving one or more schools in one campus. Six library directors, who are based in College headquarters, supervise the libraries. However, at each campus library, one member of staff is responsible for the library.

2.5.3 Staffing

The lack of an academic program in library and information science in Rwanda impacts on the number and qualification level of the UR library staff. Some library staff took their degrees in other universities abroad.
More than half of the library staff completed a two-year university program in librarianship in Rwanda before it closed and others have graduated from other disciplines. With regard to library staff, it is difficult to present a clear picture of placements due to ongoing recruitments and replacements. However, there was a total number of 75 library staff in 21 libraries.

2.5.4 Integrated library management software, equipment and infrastructure

Concerning library management software, only two libraries (CASS and CE) are currently using integrated library management software, while the four others (CBE, CAVM, CMHS and CST) are still using a manual system. Furthermore, the library management software is only functional at a college’s main library.

Regarding ICT equipment and reading space, the UR libraries are disparate. The following is a compilation of photographs that illustrate such disparities among the UR libraries.

![Figure 5: Visualization of disparities in libraries (buildings, equipment, and space)](image)

The differences represented in figure 5, reflect the libraries’ historical
background, collections, size and the disparity of academic disciplines and users that they serve. Figure 5 illustrates various library buildings, reading and search rooms and space, different shelving layouts and circulation systems. The pictures reveal a problematic setting for library cooperation. This implies that development is necessary in order to enable libraries to share resources and meet the goals of the university. The government of Rwanda regards education as a priority and therefore decided to restructure higher education as a means of achieving ambitions for education (cf. the UR merger section), which also affects libraries. However, this background points at various aspects that have not yet been considered in terms of library services.

2.5.5 Chapter summary
The general status of institutions and libraries being merged has a major influence on working conditions for librarians in the current context. The differences between the merged institutions and between libraries’ collections, staff, technical service operations, histories and missions as described in this chapter constitute various challenges to the UR Library Services (URLS). It is not enough to be under the same executive to function as a whole or to take advantage of institutional mergers. There are challenges that libraries have to face in order meet their mission within the UR. Drawing from the young history of librarianship in Rwanda, this study is a contribution to the literature and to awareness of academic libraries in Rwanda.

As many mergers aim at cost saving (Wan & Peterson, 2007), the expectations from the UR mergers to reduce costs and staff affect the ways libraries function, as well as their contribution to the core of the university which is education and research. The new context and administrative structure of the libraries, with no administrative autonomy at library level, affect the ways they function for sharing their resources.

Previous research on resource sharing noted difficulties even in a regular setting. For instance, Ellingson, Erlandsen, Kaler, and Posner (2016), reporting on the implementation of the checklist of policies and best practices intended to reduce barriers to resource sharing around the world, note the barriers and challenges encountered by libraries in the USA, Australia and Europe. Most challenges stem from lack of policies
and guidelines, asymmetries between libraries, and expectations beyond the inputs. The UR setting of unequally equipped and hitherto independent libraries in most organizational and functional aspects is challenging. Moreover, considering geographical proximity to be a favorable condition for mergers as noted in previous research (Skodvin, 1999; Norgård, & Skodvin, 2002; Wan & Peterson, 2007), the distances between libraries present a barrier for resource sharing. All the aspects presented in this chapter constitute a complex background that makes this study an interesting case to investigate.
3 Literature review

3.1 Introduction and overview

The search for relevant literature was carried out by using key terms that were derived from the research questions. The combination of key terms used for search were “academic librar*” AND “mergers”, “academic librar*” AND “resource sharing”. Other related search terms include mergers and academic libraries, academic libraries and transition, resource sharing and academic library management, mergers and opportunities, resource sharing and challenges, librarianship and professional identity. The search was mainly done through ProQuest Summon, ProQuest and ProQuest Central provided by the University of Borås library. The main sources are databases such as Library Information Science and Technology Abstracts (LISTA) and Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA). In addition, searches were also enacted through Google scholar, Scopus and Web of science. Other sources include professional networking sites such as Academia.edu and Research Gate. The relevance and professional focus of the papers were the criteria for selection for the review.

The chapter is structured in four main sections each of which is divided into different subsections. The literature review starts with a review of research on mergers in general, mainly outside academia and commonly known in the literature as Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A) followed by a review of the literature on university mergers and the mergers of academic libraries. In the second section, the focus is on research on resource sharing and its evolution following the development of ICT worldwide and in the African context in particular. The third section explores research on views and understandings about academic libraries within the development of education systems and changes influenced by ICT and shifts in users’ and society’s needs. In the fourth and last section before the summary of the chapter, literature relating to the role of librarians in a changing university environment is presented.
3.2 Research on mergers

Even if the motivations for M&A vary between cases and countries, according to Buono (2003) the overarching reason for a merger is the belief that the combination will allow the new entity to attain strategic goals faster and less expensively than separate entities (p. 90). Moreover, although business-driven mergers have changed in character since the 1990s, there have always been financial and strategic reasons influencing the mergers. These include administrative change and restructuration (Capron, Dussauge, & Mitchell, 1998; Skodvin, 1999); ambitions to enhance growth, synergy and create economies of scale in order to adapt to a globally competitive environment (Papadakis, 2005) and to government policy implementation (Seliga et al., 2019). In both cases of mergers, either voluntarily (initiated by the institutions) or forced (mainly by the government or other external stakeholders), there are advantages and disadvantages involved (Harman and Harman, 2003).

While motives for, and expectations from mergers are numerous, they are not always attained. There has been a high degree of failure among mergers and acquisitions in business and corporations according to the literature. The most cited reasons include managerial problems and poor preparation (e.g. Haunschild, 1993; McLelland, Goldsmith, & McMahon, 2014); human resource neglect (e.g. Gilles & Mercer, 2000; Schraeder & Self, 2003; Gaughan, 2005), and service failure (e.g. McLelland & Goldsmith, 2014). Furthermore, aspects such as poor, or lack of integration and resources (e.g. Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991), unequal sizes of acquirers and targets (e.g. Allred, Boal, & Holstein, 2005), and cultural conflict between merging parts (Papadakis, 2007) also play a role.

Even if there are differences between the goals of firms and higher education institutions (HEIs), they both aim for enhancing their reputations and visibility. While firms aim for reputation in order to make more profit, for HEIs, attracting funding is a means of enhancing reputation (Van Vught, 2008). Moreover, as part of the global reputation race, mergers are seen as a way of increasing status, visibility and reputation in the global market for both firms and HEIs (Geschwind et al., 2016a). However, mergers might present major challenges to
HEIs, which the adaptation to a competitive environment may cause them to deviate from their original goals.

From this overview of motives on corporate and firms mergers, the next section is devoted to a review of previous research on university mergers.

### 3.2.1 University mergers

A merger is defined as “the combination of two or more separate institutions into a single new organizational entity, in which control rests with a single governing body and a single chief executive body, and whereby all assets, liabilities, and responsibilities of the former institutions are transferred to the single new institution” (Ahmadvand et al., 2012, p. 736). While mergers are common in for-profit organizations as a way of increasing profits, the move for mergers in universities is also charged with advantages and opportunities for the institutions. In general, there are idealized ideas about university mergers in connection with the reasons for and timing of the merger. According to Geschwind, Pinheiro, & Aarrevaara (2016), mergers come in many forms and appear in various societal contexts across sectors, countries and organizations.

Moreover, cultural and geographical (regional and local) factors influence university mergers whereby universities try to respond to both (external and internal) pressures and financial cuts. In addition, “empirical studies show that praxis and theory do not always converge concerning mergers in different countries and that experiences with mergers have varied” (Skodvin 1999, p. 71) mainly depending on various factors including institutional conditions (Pinheiro et al., 2016) and the cultural aspects of the merger (Ahmadvand et al., 2012). Nowadays however, mergers are often a survival strategy as economic prospects are seen to be better for larger entities (Pinheiro et al., 2016) resulting in academic and administrative economies of scale (Norgård & Skodvin, 2002, p.73) with the aim of increasing efficiency and effectiveness (Ahmadvand et al., 2012). Academic institutions merge as a strategy to achieve what they could not achieve as individual universities (Finance, Coilland, & Mutzenhardt, 2015), for instance, for enhancing their attractiveness, international visibility and ranking (Aula & Tienari, 2011) as well as to develop their identities (Sulkowski,
Wozniak, & Seliga, 2019b).

### 3.2.2 University mergers: motives, ideals, expectations and outcomes

According to Jayaram (2003), there are ideas and visions (or at least ideals) regarding the process of university mergers and the practices connected to these ideas. In connection with the reasons for a merger, a case study of Chinese higher education by Wan and Peterson (2007) reveals both internal and external factors that motivate decisions to merge and the expectations linked to these mergers. While the external factors are mainly governmental’ socio-politico-economic responses to the growing needs of society, the internal factors are historical and to do with geographical proximity. Moreover, mergers are seen to be attractive to students and heighten international visibility and ranking (Harman & Harman, 2008; Aula & Tienari 2011). In a study of the Finnish merger that resulted in the Aalto University, Aula and Tienari (2011) pointed out the contradictions and controversies involved in building the “world-class” reputation that was intended. These controversies were linked to disconnections between what they termed “imaginary incentive” (p. 7) and the actual outcomes. In the same vein, Czarniawska (2019) notes that “universities use mergers and acquisitions as a fashion to improve their ranking positions, ignoring the effects on research and teaching” (p. 18). However, she also notes that merger trends lead to the disconnection between these three key elements in the university, which disconnection becomes a challenge to the achievement of the expectations from the merger.

According to previous research, the role of governments in encouraging mergers is highlighted. For instance, Skodvin (1999), Hay and Fourie (2002), and Kyvik (2002) note, that governments have mandated or encouraged mergers through policies and financial means in most European countries (e.g. Finland, Sweden, Britain, Netherlands, and Norway), Australia and South Africa. In China, Wan and Peterson (2007) find that merging has been used as a tool by the government since 1992 to reform the higher education system. In doing so, the aim in most cases was mainly to rationalize and reorganize the higher education system. The governments’ motives for mergers include also increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of higher education in order to meet both economic and social objectives at national and regional
levels (Harman & Meek 2002). For instance, in a review of the research literature and their own study on mergers in higher education, Harman and Harman (2003) note that mergers in higher education are frequently driven by optimistic cost/benefit estimations such as costs saving and the increase of efficiency and efficacy. Ambitions to effectivise planning and exercise more control over education by governments and to improve student services are also pointed out as motivations. In a survey on mergers in the European universities, Pruvot, Estermann, and Mason (2015) note that most university mergers in Europe were commended by governments in order to increase efficiency, efficacy and the rational use of funds. However, motivations for mergers as well as their intended outcomes vary between universities and countries on the whole (Pruvot et al., 2015).

As noted previously, expectations on cutting costs through mergers have not always been reached; rather, considerable financial and human costs have been noted (Harman & Harman 2003, p. 42). For instance, Skodvin (1999) notes that mergers are likely to incur considerable costs. In addition, costs are difficult to estimate beforehand mainly due to the dynamism of the process as noted by Wan and Peterson (2007). According to Buono (2003), there are hidden costs connected to the process of the merger, which are not always accounted for at the outset. In an earlier empirical study on the outcome of the merger of non-university colleges in Norway, Kyvik (2002) argues, “neither theoretical arguments nor empirical studies unambiguously support the assumption of economies of scale in large higher education institutions” (p. 70). In a review of the literature on mergers in the Nordic region, (i.e. Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark), Pinheiro, Geschwind, and Aarrevaara (2013) note a contradiction between theory and practice with regard to economies of scale. They concluded that most mergers did not lead to economies of scale (financial efficacy) as expected. Moreover, Swanepoel (2004b) emphasizes that economies of scale are seldom acknowledged as the outcome of a merger even though it is claimed as the motivation for most higher education mergers (p. 9). With the exception of the merger of Aalto (Finland) which was merged with the aim of adding value rather than saving money (Pruvot et al., 2015, p. 19), economies of scale are often reported as motives but seldom, if ever, mentioned as an outcome. To the contrary, Kyvik (2002) in a study of a merger between scattered non-university colleges
in Norway found that the more the number of units, colleges and campus, the more costs increase for administration due to the complex organization structure of multi-campus colleges.

There are also expectations that mergers will lead to, or act as tools for identity building. Drawing on the Swedish case of a merger between University College Kalmar and Växjö University, which resulted in the Linnaeus University, Geschwind et al. (2016a) found that mergers can be used as tools for internal-identity-construction and reputation building, thus boosting the university’s attractiveness to students and funding agencies. In this case, the greatest incentive was to increase the merged institutions’ status by becoming a university. Branding can also be seen as a crucial part of the merger process (Aula & Tienari, 2011) through which a university constructs its identity in accordance with its aspirations and as a means of comparing itself with well-established universities (Stensaker, 2015). The construction of identity and reaping the other expected advantages of the merger depend however, on how well the merger process has been prepared.

The most important phase of the merger process is the establishment of a new organizational culture. This constitutes the cornerstone of building a successful new organization according to Muhonen et al. (2011). These authors argue that a merger of two or three universities is a task requiring the restructuring of preexisting cultures, staffing and management, creating new services or combining others. This will have effects on the legal status as well as the working environment of the new institution. As Muller (2006) observes, a merger is a process not an occasion. Geschwind et al. (2016a, p. 142) also emphasize the significance of the merger process itself. Therefore, as Weaver (2008) suggests, the merger has to be planned beforehand by clearly defining the route to follow, the goals to attain and the expected outcomes. A thorough analysis of feasibility and possible barriers prior to the merger is a key factor in the success of a merger otherwise the unpredicted barriers could lead to the failure of the merger (Stephenson, 2011; Seliga et al., 2019). Various factors contribute to the success of a merger. Harman and Harman (2003) emphasize that “sensitivity to human and cultural factors and effective leadership are of utmost importance in achieving success in merger processes” (p. 29). In this regard, they conclude that “due sensitivity being paid to cultural and
human issues, can produce substantial longer-term benefits, both for individual institutions and higher education systems” (p. 42). However, Harman (2002) noted that the sociocultural aspects of the merger process were not given much attention in the literature on mergers, despite its crucial importance to a successful merger.

Apart from the difficulty of assessing outcomes, the results and effects of mergers may vary from one case to another (Pinheiro, Geschwind & Aarrevaara, 2016). For instance, the results of the Chinese study by Wan and Peterson indicate that while academic outcomes improved, cost-efficiency and effectiveness fell far behind expectations (Wan & Peterson, 2007, p. 694-5). The reasons in this case included a huge amount of time taken to complete the merger mainly due to the difficulty of agreeing on the name of the new institution and for the struggle for identity. In connection to economies of scale evidence and recommendations from a research report on mergers in Europe, Pruvot et al. (2015, p. 55) suggest that cost saving should not be the primary motive for a merger given the transition and implementation costs.

Having studied many mergers of HEIs, Lang (2003) identified two different motives. First, that of cost effectiveness. Second, increased diversity of services. Frequently, both effects were hoped for although they tended to be in conflict with each other. If the merger is well executed, the result will not be a trade-off between these two motives. However, in cases such as the UR, when government mandates the merger, the main aim is usually economic efficiency based on the principle of economy of scale. The following outcomes can be hoped for:

- that new revenue will stream from new programs;
- the costs of existing programs will be reduced;
- government policy will be better aligned with incentive structures;
- the resources of larger institutions will benefit smaller institutions; and
- critical mass can be achieved in specialized areas.

Lang (2003) argues that the ways in which economies of scale work is often poorly understood and overestimated by those planning the merger.
Most research on university mergers is focused on technical and administrative processes (e.g. Mael, 2014), requirements, phases and time-taking for effective and successful mergers (e.g. Skodvin, 1999; Kotter, 2007), and the advantages of and challenges to successful mergers (Muller, 2006). Furthermore, there is also research on the major factors affecting decisions to merge (Kyvik & Stensaker, 2013), and on the role of external stakeholders in merger initiatives (Stensaker, Persson, & Pinheiro, 2016).

Even if research on mergers has been conducted, many studies, as Hatos (2017) notes, are focused on the process rather than on results (e.g. Pruvot et al., 2015; Nokkala & Välimaa, 2017) or they focus on the effects of the merger on particular units. Those with a particular focus on libraries reveal administrative challenges, opportunities, advantages and disadvantages or lessons learned from successful mergers for both libraries and merged institutions, as presented in the section on library mergers below.

### 3.2.3 Mergers of academic libraries

The merger of libraries is a transformative process that is expected to pass through a series of well-prepared phases (Muller, 2006). This process implies commitment, negative and positive changes, challenges and achievements. It can lead to success or failure depending on how it has been prepared.

Successful mergers are often achieved after tensions and long struggles. For instance, in the merger of three Finnish universities (Aalto, Eastern Finland, and Turku), Muhonen et al. (2011) noted that the disparity in resources, and the disruption of working traditions in the merging units slowed down innovations in libraries after the merger. An additional challenge was the alteration of management in a new university library structure. Investigating strategic work at Turku University libraries, using a case study approach to study the merger process, Juntunen et al. (2013, p. 230) identified challenges related to the management of libraries in different physical locations on a large campus. In this case, 15 different libraries merged under one single coordination unit. Juntunen and colleagues found that, libraries had difficulties in stabilizing and working under one managerial unit. This was a major challenge, especially since the reorganization of staffing and
management was undertaken together with a major library building renovation in order to meet the needs of an increased number of users.

It would seem that there is no perfect way to lead a successful merger. However, there are key aspects to consider. For example, empirical studies conducted on merging university libraries in Europe (Finland, Scotland, UK and England), in USA and in South Africa show that success was accomplished through collaboration, planning and effective communication (e.g. Swanepoel, 2005; Muhonen et al. 2011; Weaver, 2008; Tong & Kisby, 2009; Rozum & Brassaw, 2013).

There are some examples in the research on failure to successfully complete a merger. Failure is often caused by budget constraints, poor preparation of the merger process, lack of professionalism or experience, and a lack of communication (Muller, 2006; Rozum & Brassaw, 2013). One of the examples given by Brinkman (2006) is the case of University of Louisville (Kentucky, USA). The example illustrates that the merger of two libraries in 1989 resulted in the closure of one of the libraries in 2006, due to lack of funds even though its collections were growing rapidly.

As with university mergers, library mergers are also charged with assumptions including those of cost benefits. Apart from mergers initiated by libraries, mergers of universities have affected libraries, as they have to fit in to new structures. Martin and Samels (1994) claim that mergers intended for “mutual growth” help create an academic environment that is defined by services and resources. Moreover, Stimatz, White and Crawford (1997, pp. 39-40) reflecting on the implications of merging libraries on services and resources at a university in the USA, note that mergers have been seen as ways for colleges and universities to expand their programs and, services and to increase student enrolment while potentially cutting costs through resource sharing. They found that the cost cuts aimed for in the mergers, lead libraries to networking, consolidation or affiliation that presented opportunities for innovation and collaboration. However, problems can arise where libraries have to stretch and share already scarce resources and budgets. Moreover, the pooling and joint administration of existing libraries, which boosts interlibrary loan arrangements (Lang, 2002, p. 44), can also present challenges for collections and service alignment.
in a dispersed structure (Moll, 2010, p. 57). While library mergers are expected to cut costs or to achieve more with less resources, Swanepoel (2004b) concludes, “the library mergers do not necessarily lead to economies of scale, as it is often assumed by the initiators of mergers” (p. 12).

Mergers are both time-consuming (Wan & Peterson, 2007) and stressful activities and the post-merger integration period can take longer than expected (Geschwind et al., 2016a, p. 140). Kotter (2007) highlights the primacy of motivation, clear vision and also enough time to grieve for the loss of the old organizations as prerequisites for a successful merger. When challenges are faced various positive outcomes will ensue as well as lessons learned, according to reports. For example, after the Finnish library mergers, (1) the librarians found that they were considered on equal terms as other staff in capacity building programs (Muhonen et al., 2011), and (2) users gained access to the extensive resources of the new libraries, which they would not have accessed before the merger (Muhonen et al., 2011; Juntunen et al., 2013). Swanepoel (2005) lists ten lessons learned based on a survey study on the mergers of eight libraries at colleges of higher education in Flanders, South Africa. These lessons highlight the importance of not underestimating the complexity of library mergers, as they do not follow the same lines as mergers between institutions but rather lead to change in library management style (centralization vs decentralization or vice versa). Well-planned mergers also bring advantages to the management of differences between the merged libraries even if the plan diverges during the process (pp. 92-93).

In addition to lessons learned, in an earlier study Swanepoel (2004b) reported on inconsistencies between theories, beliefs and practices underlying the understandings, expectations and motives attached to library mergers. He reached the conclusion that academic library mergers are not necessarily similar to the institution’s merger process. Thus, it is important that libraries have enough time to reach expected outcomes as the process for libraries is seen to be longer than that for the institutions, and even that the time span varies from one case to another. Furthermore, Swanepoel (2004a) surveying expectations and concerns of library staff before and after the merger, found that they may change over time depending on factors such as communication and
involvement of library staff in integration activities.

In a case study, Rozum and Brassaw (2013) focused on strategic and practical processes in merging two geographically distant academic libraries at the University of Utah (USA). They paid attention to use of the shared catalog and electronic resources as well as staff involvement in the processes of a voluntary merger. As the authors note, success depended on (1) effective communication between the libraries’ staff, (2) strategic management and evaluation of the concerns and anxieties of staff, (3) appropriate time management, and (4) to the staff’s ability to learn from their own mistakes.

Previous research takes up the advantages of mergers but also point out that mergers are complex processes that often involve important changes in administrative and academic structures (Wan & Peterson, 2007). These changes affect the rest of the institution, i.e. different units such as libraries. The outcomes of mergers range from academic gains to the branding of institutions nationally and internationally. However, to summarize common motivations for and outcomes of mergers: increased efficacy, efficiency, quality and impact, strengthening of institutional positions, brand development, cost reduction and resource sharing.

In light of the above, the merger resulting in the UR is likely to present a challenge for the libraries of previously independent institutions that are now expected to function as one entity. Mergers of former HEIs also affect other administrative entities and this in turn can also affect libraries in different ways. As integral parts of a university, any change in the institution affects academic libraries directly or indirectly. Likewise, library services are affected by the opportunities and challenges the universities are facing or confronted with. As Cox and Corall (2013) suggest, libraries have to be prepared to navigate in the complex setting of opportunities and challenges that universities face.

The complexity of merger processes is presented in this section. The examples given of studies of academic library mergers demonstrate the intricacies of mergers in various ways. In most of the studies focus was on how one or two aspects of the merger affect library services, especially administrative and strategic aspects. However, no study was
devoted to research about the difficulties related to practices of resource sharing in libraries’ everyday activities in a merger context while, according to Muller (2006), one of aims of merging is resource sharing. This serves as the ground for the current study, which intends to explore the impact of a merger on library services with particular attention to resource sharing, which is seen as a strategy for managing libraries.

3.3 Views and understandings about academic libraries

Views about the role of academic libraries vary. However, from the viewpoint of resource sharing where library resources are pooled to provide better services, there are various functions that libraries can develop. As academic libraries provide services in a rapidly changing world, they have to prove that they can work efficiently despite challenges (Jubb, 2010). Today, most library functions are interconnected through ICT, which works as a crossway tool for most functions in modern institutions. Academic libraries cannot therefore be isolated from the development of ICT (Jain, 2013). For instance, with regard to research achievement, the “labor and budget investment in e-resources and an investment in university libraries enhances academic research achievement” according to Noh (2012, p. 109).

3.3.1 Libraries and the development of teaching and learning

It is argued that an academic library occupies a central place in a university’s mission of teaching, learning and research (Sennyey, Ross, & Mills, 2009; Cunningham & Tabur, 2012). Chigbu and Idoko (2013), in research on the role of academic libraries in Nigeria, emphasized that libraries can contribute to the university’s mission by providing fundamental services and facilities for the university community. The emphasis on the centrality of libraries in universities is recognized in connection with their ability to meet global developmental requirements and trends. Over the years, research on academic libraries identifies shifts in library functions (e.g. Abbott, 1998; Baruchson-Arbib & Bronstein, 2002; Fourie, 2004; Vassilakaki & Moniarou-Papaconstantinou, 2015). These changes implicitly give rise to new requirements regarding settings, space, facilities and equipment and also the need for new competences in the professional development of
Moreover, Spiro and Henry (2010, p. 6) argue that establishing a modern research or academic library is not a simple theoretical question. It is demanding in terms of facilities, staff, collections, and physical space and equipment even in cases where an “all-digital” library is envisioned (cf. Spiro & Henry, 2010; Fallin, 2016). According to Choy and Goh (2016, p. 13), “academic libraries are changing from being a provider of information resources to that of facilitator and activist in the business of knowledge acquisition by users in learning, teaching and research activities”. There is evidence that libraries contribute to learning, teaching and research activities. However, as the education market is subject to constant change, users become more and more independent in their search for information. Jubb (2010) argues that it is important for libraries to be proactive in “demonstrating the value of their activities in improving students’ experiences and in supporting teaching, learning and research” (p. 145). Dempsey and Malpas (2018, p. 85) also highlight that the value and identity of the library are “associated with the specialized research, teaching and learning workflows it supports”. Libraries need to respond effectively to university requirements in terms of space, collections and service support.

### 3.3.2 Library and space

Even if it can be argued that “remote access to information isolates users and students who seek social places to meet and interact” (MacWhinnie, 2003, p. 243), students also need quiet places for learning (Gayton, 2008). Given that users access resources remotely, Choy and Goh (2016) argue that academic libraries should also provide quality space for learning. Gayton points out that the architectural design of libraries needs to be more attractive in the digital age, as users of physical libraries not only want socialize with others but also to benefit from a quiet environment in order to engage in learning (Gayton, 2008).

Considering the needs of users, which vary from one user to another, the provision of library space can address four needs as suggested by Choy and Goh (2016, p. 14); the need to collaborate, the need of a sanctuary, the need to interact in a library environment and the need for a community space. In a vision of the new public library, Jochumsen,
Hvenegaard Rasmussen, and Skot-Hansen (2012) propose four ideal spaces (for inspiration, learning, meeting and performing) to meet modern library users’ needs. The notion of these spaces, initially suggested for public libraries in Nordic countries, can perhaps in some regards be applied to academic libraries. In the same vein, Cunningham and Tabur (2012), emphasize the importance of considering the user’s needs while planning spaces in order to provide both comfort and the feel of an ideal learning space.

According to Fallin (2016), a library occupies a central place in a university and is more than a building and book repository or store. It is a space for learning that involves various types of resources and staff competences (Chan & Spodick, 2014) as well as functional elements of design. According to Gayton (2008, p. 60), the “library has never been just a book warehouse” but rather spaces in which many users engage with various intellectual resources. According to Sennyey et al. (2009, p. 252), an academic library is a combination of space with its equipment, infrastructure, collections and staff. It has been highlighted that if libraries claim to afford functional learning environments, space has to be provided in order to be able to promote and facilitate users’ collaborative learning (Seaman, 2006) and research.

Schoombee and Raju (2013), assessing the role of academic libraries in supporting research with reference to the case of Stellenbosch University libraries (South Africa), conclude that libraries play an important role in speeding up the production and quality of research. The authors emphasize the need for “repurposing spaces” in libraries to focus on “library as a service” (p. 29). In the same line of reasoning about contemporary libraries, Gayton (2008) suggests that library buildings need to be (re)designed in order to facilitate social and communal spaces for learning, easy access, and to afford intellectual interaction with library collections.

### 3.3.3 Library and collections

In addition to space, library collections are important factors in a library’s success. Even though Spiro and Henry (2010) point out that electronic resources are tending to replace physical library collections, Jubb (2010) considers it unlikely that physical collections will be replaced in the short and medium term. Some authors (e.g. Drake,
2007; Fallin, 2016) emphasized the need to hold both formats together over time in order to meet user needs as physical collections still play an important role for them.

In a survey study conducted on the document delivery and use practices of researchers in two Finnish universities, i.e. University of Jyväskylä (JYU) and the University of Eastern Finland (UEF), Muhonen and Saarti (2016), find that both physical and digital documents are important to researchers. The results of the study indicate that electronic resources are the main materials for researchers followed by printed materials borrowed from physical libraries. Recently, Rintamäki, Flemming, Lehto, and Toukonen (2018) in an empirical study of Tritonia Joint Library (Finland) highlight the importance of both physical and virtual spaces for users in accessing a variety of resources both inside and outside the library premises.

Despite debate on the value of printed and electronic resources, there are plenty of examples of initiatives to preserve print resources worldwide (Saarti, Laitinen, & Vattulainen, 2017). Efforts to align information resources with developments in teaching and learning patterns as well as with ICT development has historically been seen to involve new roles for libraries and librarians (Fourie, 2004; Melchionda, 2007; Mabunda, 2014). Embracing new developments involves adapting infrastructure to incorporate technological tools and facilities, which in turn influence collection development, curation, storage and dissemination.

3.3.4 Library and information technology

In order to meet both user’s needs and teaching requirements, modern academic libraries have to effectively integrate information technological tools. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) supports the sharing of information and resources to greater numbers of information seekers (Ruan & Qiang, 2013). Libraries and librarians can use the advantages of new technological tools in innovative ways (Bailey-Hainer et al., 2014). As information resources and ways of accessing them expand, libraries learn how to share resources with each other and adapt their role in order to accommodate the needs of their users in a changing environment (Posner and Simpson, 2011). Resource sharing has therefore evolved from sharing
printed books to a greater focus on digital resources (Ellingson et al., 2016). Simon (2013), and Watson and Howden (2013) take up the issues of the integration and use of technology, learning spaces and the development of new support services in modern academic libraries. As far as the use of technology in libraries is concerned, libraries strive to offer well-designed environments with modern facilities (Bailin, 2011) that are better equipped for collaboration (Choy & Goh, 2016; Ferria et al., 2017). However, the introduction of new technology may not suffice alone. In order to deliver better service, Beard and Dale (2010) highlight a need for adequate buildings and other infrastructures and equipment, which according to Saunders (2015), requires substantial financial means. Technological development also influences the practices and competencies of libraries and librarians.

Due to ICT development, new roles for librarians emerge (Sinclair, 2009) as well as new competences and skills (Huvila, Holmberg, Kronqvist-Berg, Nivakoski, & Widén, 2013). In a review of literature on the emerging roles of information professionals and librarians in the USA and UK in a time span of 14 years from 2000 to 2014, Vassilakaki & Moniarou-Papaconstantinou (2015) conclude that subsequent to technological development the roles of academic librarians are continuously transformed. For instance, while few decades back, Abbott (1998) noted an introduction and use of visual images into the education, Dickson’s (2013) description of the role of the twenty-first century library is to moving beyond the analogue and providing space for digital media creation and interaction. Sinclair (2014) describes academic libraries as incubator for digital scholarship within the universities namely that they have the potential to lead the digitalization of the university research. Sandhu (2018) using examples from the UK, USA, and Australia to discuss the role of academic libraries in the digital transformation of universities, concludes that academic libraries play an increasingly crucial role in leading digital transformation of universities in teaching and learning, scholarship, and infrastructure. Furthermore, academic libraries, proved to leading innovations such as digitalization of the university’s business administration offices and providing technology platforms (p. 296). In connection to this important role of the library within the university, Sandhu underlines the need for competent digital workforce.
Other issues related to technical equipment include WIFI access for facilitating the use of portable devices for access to information materials (e.g. Sennyey et al., 2009; Becker, 2015; Fallin, 2016). The authors view affordances for the use of portable technology as a precondition for library use. Muhonen and Saarti (2016) illustrate the extent to which digital innovation and the popularity of electronic resources have changed the ways of sharing resources between researchers. They highlight the considerable use of e-mails and websites for acquiring and disseminating information materials.

However, the use of technology has consequences for libraries and librarians. While technological developments change the library landscape, libraries also have to uphold the centrality of student learning in relation to the technology (Lin, Chen, & Chang, 2010). Changes have to be implemented without threatening student’s use of library space (Bennett, 2006), which is seen as crucial to their learning activities (Lin et al., 2010).

3.3.5 Modernization and transformation of libraries for improved services

As libraries depend on their institutions, Ferria et al. (2017, p. 20) urge universities to “evaluate their library facilities, services, technology, and information resources to determine the impact on student learning and how libraries support the research and public service mission of the institution”. In addition, the advent of digital tools and resources as well as pedagogical shifts that emphasize collaboration, creation, and student centered learning have changed the library landscape. Libraries have responded to calls for user-centered learning with good reason; student-centered learning is social, active and interactive (Foster & Gibbons, 2007). While trying to remain relevant, libraries allocate and reallocate space in recognition of the pedagogical shift toward interaction among learners (Jackson & Shenton, 2010, Oliveira, 2016) by becoming both physical and virtual platforms for knowledge creation.

The transformation and modernization of academic libraries is linked to needs arising from digitalization. Digitalization dictates the (re)organization and management of space planning, collection, and staff and facilities in academic libraries (Gayton, 2008). The increase
and availability of electronic resources (journals and e-books) to users outside libraries also constitute a threat to physical libraries where they have to address these challenges by creating new services (social space) and facilities (non-library facilities e.g. café, seminar rooms) to attract users to their libraries (Wisner, 2001). The changes in social and cultural forces such as education and mainly technological change, affect academic libraries, which are urged to respond not passively but by taking responsibilities as part of librarianship, which is a growing profession (Sturges, 2015; Sewell & Kingsley, 2017).

The modernization and transformation of libraries is also linked to developments in teaching and understandings of learning patterns. Library buildings have become multipurpose venues that accommodate research, learning and teaching activities (Choy & Goh, 2016). Consequently, according to Gayton (2008, p. 62), modern academic library buildings need to incorporate what is commonly known as “information commons” which integrate both technological and information resource. This facility affords new collaborative areas for learning outside classrooms activities (Beagle, 1999; MacWhinnie, 2003; Lippincott, 2004). Changes in teaching and learning landscape to learner-centered approach has influenced the ways libraries work and integrate ICT to meet the needs of users by integrating learning spaces, learning commons, and collaborative spaces that facilitate collaboration between users (Beagle 2010; Oliveira, 2018).

Information infrastructure is also key for users who need to remotely access resources and also for libraries to be able to communicate with distant users and provide resources for them (Budd, 2005). However, the acquisition, selection and application of modern library management systems has been found problematic and unaligned with organizational processes, and the training of librarians (e.g. Olson, 2010). Nevertheless, Mohonen et al. (2011) affirm that library management systems are among the first things to adapt to new situations, especially in the context of a merger.

Even if, as notes Riggs (2002, p. 109), “the belief that everything is going to be online influences decision-makers not to fund requests for new libraries”, a well-equipped library building with enough space remains important in the academic community even in the era of
technological change. In their empirical study on the views of students on library buildings, Shill and Tonner (2004, p. 149) conclude, “well-planned, contemporary libraries are still used heavily in an era of rapid technological change” regardless of remote access to electronic resources and the availability of internet.

Moreover, the modernization of academic libraries (Shill & Tonner, 2004) implies both staff development and changes in library practices. According to Saarti et al. (2017), the rapid evolvement of the operational environment of academic institutions has an effect on staff roles and services in different ways. For instance, they found that growth in information resources triggered changes in the collection policies of Finnish academic libraries. The digitalization of documents affects dissemination of research and the utilization of documented academic information by academics (Muhonen & Saarti, 2016). Likewise, the shift to digital services and collections influences how library resources are managed and boosts new roles for libraries (Tenopir, Sandusky, Allard, & Birch, 2014).

The new roles of libraries also bring into question the tasks and skills of librarians. Although sociocultural contexts differ from one country to another, the professional roles of librarians are globally similar. In most cases, new trends in teaching and research and in users’ needs point towards research subject specialists (Nolin, 2013) and librarian specialties (Cox & Corall, 2013). The main new and emerging roles for librarians identified by Vassilakaki and Moniarou-Papaconstantinou (2015) include technology specialists, embedded librarians, teaching, information consultants, subject librarians and knowledge managers. These new roles require the involvement and openness of academic librarians to developing new skills and visions for their libraries.

The evolution of information technology has led to change and new expectations and ideals in academic libraries. The following section therefore consists of a review of previous studies on the roles of academic librarians.

3.4 The role of librarians and the ideals of a university

As ICT has influenced libraries, so also the profession of librarianship has developed, in interaction with the apogee of internet based tools
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(e.g. Alam, 2014; Daly, 2015). Moreover, development within the field of education has affected the needs of users in academic libraries (Choy & Goh, 2016). Consequently, librarians require specialist skills and the ability to contribute to the support of research (e.g. Fourie, 2004; Nolin, 2013), student learning and the achievement of the university’s mission. Cox and Corrall (2013) have identified different librarian profiles such as system librarian, digital librarian, repository manager, clinical librarian, information specialist, teaching librarian or information literacy educators, and information and knowledge manager. Librarians are seen as contributing to the development of research through collaboration with researchers rather than as information providers or intermediaries, but as research team-members. Even if, at certain periods of time, there have been disconnections between librarians and researchers – the latter seeking and retrieving information on their own – one could say that there is a need to reestablish this interaction since both parties have common goals (Nolin, 2013). Academic librarians are seen as part of the staff supporting indirectly the core operations of the organization (Mintzberg, 2009), in this case research, student learning and the work of the teaching staff.

However, a major problem is that the importance of libraries is often downplayed in centralized discussions on university economy (Storey, 2009). The role and skills of academic librarians are expected to adjust to the changes and development of educational systems in order to effectively meet the needs of library users. In the digital era with student-centered models, librarians are urged to play new roles other than traditional ones (Bewick & Corall, 2010; Wickramanayake, 2014). The role of librarians is fundamental to a library. Lankes (2016) considers an empty room with a librarian to be a library while a room containing books without a librarian is not a library. However, in the move towards resource sharing, there is a tendency to reduce the number of librarians. This in turn will have a negative effect on library services as well as on academic/student performance.

The evolution of teaching and development in universities requires librarians to be more skilled than previously, for instance in delivering services other than providing access to resources, and therefore need competences in teaching and information management (Cox & Corall, 2013).
Petersohn (2016) has identified a need for professional competence in bibliometrics.

In order to provide better and innovative services, the competences of librarians are key. In the research on the roles of libraries in modern environments, Maceviciute (2014) emphasizes the role of library staff in either bringing about change or hindering it. She views librarians’ competences as a force for transformation. Even Lankes (2016) emphasizes the power of librarians while at the same time presaging their changing roles in meeting the progress of teaching and the creation of knowledge. This is reflected in new job descriptions subsequent to technological development in scholarly publishing, and academic research (Nentwich, 2003; Wilson, 2004; Sandhu, 2018). According to Bell and Shank (2007, p. 18), librarians have to integrate new skills sets in order to deal with new technology and instructional designs, marketing and other areas in combination with the traditional library knowledge base. This implies continuous education and training in different aspects of librarianship (Gregory, 2005). The need for new skills and competences is continually on the increase although with variations in different countries and from time to time (Sewell & Kingsley, 2017). In addition, academic librarians have to struggle for and negotiate their professional identity (which is sometimes not recognized) in competition with other professions at their workplace and beyond.

### 3.4.1 Librarians and professional identity

Research point out that librarians need to be equipped in order to face the challenges ahead of their profession. Following technological development, academic libraries and librarians no longer have a monopoly in areas such as storage, cataloguing and classification (Abbott, 1998; Sennyey et al., 2009) nor in managing, and the provision and retrieval of information (Ross & Sennyey, 2008). Rather, they are in constant competitions with other professions for instance within computer science and information technology, publishing and providers. In the effort to adapt to change and new roles, academic librarians have been facing challenges related to their identity or jurisdiction (Abbott, 1988).
Fugate, Kinicki, and Ashforth (2004, p. 21) studying employability and identity in a three dimensional lens (career identity-adaptability-and social and human capital) note that “identity narratives provide a foundation for an employee’s occupational value not only in her or his own eyes, but also in those of valued others, which is critically important to employability”. Moreover, La Pointe (2010), using the concept of positioning to understand the construction of career identity, notes that professional identity is tied to a particular role or place. In other words, identity is situated in a specific period of time and in historical context. Gray (2013) views the ‘librarian identity’ as a contested arena and involved in a constant war of values throughout history in the philosophy of librarianship. According to Gray, new identities develop as librarians engage in shaping their profession to fit in with contemporary trends. This may take another shape when libraries are involved in processes that disrupt their usual ways of doing things and where they are required to develop new ways of working.

3.5 Previous research on library management, resource sharing and evoluntional trends

3.5.1 Introduction and overview

This chapter presents an overview of previous studies related to resource sharing and academic library management, and academic librarians. It is structured into three main sections, which are further divided into different subsections. After the introduction on different perspectives on resource sharing, follows a section that reviews previous studies on resource sharing, their focus and main results. This section includes two subsections, one of studies on the evolution of resource sharing throughout the development of ICT and another on resource sharing in the African context, mainly on challenges and opportunities.

In the previous sections, a substantial focus has been on the motivations underlying the practices of mergers. These dramatic forms of organizational change involve fundamental transformations of how people do the things they do. They are common both within and outside university settings as there are strong preconceived notions concerning the advantages of melding different organizations together. When
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Fugate, Kinicki, and Ashforth (2004, p. 21) studying employability and identity in a three dimensional lens (career identity - adaptability - and social and human capital) note that “identity narratives provide a foundation for an employee's occupational value not only in her or his own eyes, but also in those of valued others, which is critically important to employability”. Moreover, La Pointe (2010), using the concept of positioning to understand the construction of career identity, notes that professional identity is tied to a particular role or place. In other words, identity is situated in a specific period of time and in historical context.

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On the one hand, resource sharing is one of the expected outcomes of the merger. In such a process, economies of scale involving budget cuts and the reduction of staff are common (cf. Ahmadvand et al., 2012). On the other hand, resource sharing, which is expected to increase access to available resources for more users, is advantageous in principle and is charged with different meanings, assumptions and expectations by different actors and stakeholders.

Assumptions about resource sharing include expectations that the unnecessary duplication of resources and work will be reduced, and that the availability and use of spare resources will be optimized (Sridhar, 1995). However, expectations of achieving more at less cost or getting something for nothing syndrome has not been always successful (Sridhar, 1995) and at least not in academic libraries (Swanepoel, 2004b). As a consequence of constant change in scholarly publishing and in connection with the development of teaching and learning in universities, understandings and practices of resource sharing are also undergoing change in order to meet the needs of contemporary users (O’Brien, 2018). The focus in this thesis is not on scholarly understandings of resource sharing but rather on the ways in which this concept has been strategically used in order to facilitate the merger processes.

An appraisal of the research presented here shows that there are few studies on resource sharing in academic libraries conducted in a setting of a merger. Those focusing on university (or library) mergers reveal that libraries find it difficult to realize in practice the expected advantages mainly due to dissimilarities between the merged

Berthilde Uwamwezi
institutions and gaps in the preparation process, among other things (e.g. Swanepoel, 2005; Flemming, 2011; Heck et al., 2013). There are of course advantages related to the cooperation in collection development, budgets and improvements of library services (e.g. Huang, 2000; Mael, 2014), especially when libraries are involved in the merger process from the very beginning (e.g. Saarti & Juntunen, 2011). It is also important to note that many studies on resource sharing have focused mainly on one type of resource, e.g. information materials (e.g. Rozum & Brassaw, 2013) or technology, buildings and space and research support services including staff expertise and competences (e.g. Rintamäki et al., 2018). However, less attention has been paid to resource sharing as a more complex phenomenon, charged with various expectations in the processes of mergers and involving library personnel, buildings and facilities as resources to be pooled for better services and management.

3.5.2 Forms, motives and meanings of resource sharing

According to Edwards (1994) resource sharing between libraries is a long-standing practice and takes a number of forms including inter-library lending, co-operative acquisitions, shared storage facilities, staff education, sharing of human and computer facilities, and information networks. According to Frederiksen, Bean, and Nance (2012), resource sharing refers to cooperative collection development and interlibrary loans. Its focus has been mainly on printed resources in the past (Ogba, 2014). It also refers to any activity shared by two or more libraries to facilitate, improve and develop library operations and to increase the exploitation of library resources and services by their users (Bouazza, 1986).

Resource sharing is also considered by some authors (e.g. Huang, 2000) as an important concept and as an expected outcome of most mergers. With the rise of ICT resource sharing nowadays also refers to the exchange or delivery of a variety of information resources in multiple formats (Bailey-Hainer et al., 2014). While resource sharing based on printed materials was based on the idea of cutting costs (Bakker, 1998), the availability of electronic resources opened up new opportunities and challenges in resource sharing. However, the diversity of electronic resources and change in scholarly publishing has actually made them more expensive and difficult for any single library to access on their
own (Pinfield, Salter, & Bath, 2016). This has led to new cooperative activities and strategies such as building consortia in order to make information available to users.

In the digital environment, modern academic libraries establish agreements to merge catalogues, establish union list databases, and software (Bailey-Hainer et al., 2014) with the aim of increasing efficiency and reducing costs (Turner, 2014). The motives for these arrangements are driven by the constantly rising prices for resources. In such agreements, libraries join in efforts to increase their purchasing power in order to negotiate collective licensing at reduced prices for electronic resources (Bakker, 1998; Chalhoub, 2017). Moreover, libraries share resources in order to overcome not only budget cuts and licensing terms but also to enable access to resources by various users and libraries (Schofield, Fielden, Harris, & Wilkinson, 2001, Maskell, 2008; Ellingson et al., 2016). Thus, contemporary libraries share different kinds of resources including library materials but also metadata, computer resources, best practices, and expertise (Webster, 2006). In addition to discussions on academic library resource sharing that focus on activities between institutions, internal resource sharing or inter-campus collaboration (Seal, 2016, p. 127) may help to meet decreasing budgets and the demand of users through shared facilities, integrated systems and shared licensed collections (Tong & Kisby, 2009).

Mugridge (2013) notes that most libraries share resources to overcome various challenges linked to flat, diminishing or no budgets at all. The aim of such collaborations, as she underlines, is to help libraries become stronger together through sharing staff expertise and facilities, and to bridge the gaps existing in their own resources (Mugridge, 2013). As users’ needs increase most libraries seek to cooperate and share resources to supplement their local collections (Evans and Sapanaro, 2012; Breeding, 2013). Resource sharing has been, and still is, an important part of the package of services to users, a solution to the lack of resources through improved access to, and a way of supporting research (Shreeves, 1997; Jalloh, 1999; Patterson, 2009; Chalhoub, 2017).
3.5.3 Resource sharing and development of ICT

Developments in ICT shape resource sharing (Ellingson et al., 2016) in terms of the range of services offered and how they are delivered (Bailey-Hainer et al., 2014). ICT has not only changed what libraries can do and what users expect from them, but also what users can do. ICT enables users to access various new forms of information repositories. The use of information technology to access electronic resources allows them to be easily shared by researchers within and outside libraries (Ross & Sennyey, 2008, p. 145). Effective resource sharing of electronic resources requires the development of material and human resources, policies and practices (Ogba, 2014) as well as effective coordination and communication between libraries to ensure the timely provision of materials for patrons (Spink, 1998, p. 2). McLean (1999) reviewing projects and the factors underpinning resource sharing between Australian libraries in the light of the development of a resource sharing infrastructure in the USA and Europe argues that the technical development of information infrastructures is key for interlibrary loan and resource sharing if the challenges of distance between libraries is to be met. In an empirical investigation on resource sharing among academic libraries in Latin America (Nicaragua, Honduras, Bolivia), Marvin (2015) notes the contribution of ICT to the improvement of resource sharing. However, the variety of devices and systems in libraries presented challenges to resource sharing. Other challenges included difficulties in building consortia when different languages are involved (Spanish and English) and the lack of infrastructure (e.g. lower wireless and bandwidth capacity) supporting libraries.

In connection with the use of ICT in resource sharing initiatives, several studies highlight the economic benefits linked to cooperation and joint-use library resources between academic libraries (Flemming, 2011; Acadia, 2016; Rintamäki et al., 2018). An example of a joint university library in Finland is provided by Flemming (2011). This library was built subsequent to the merger of three universities (into Aalto University) as a way of providing printed and electronic resources in one place to users at Vaasa campus while the main campuses were located in Turku and Helsinki. This joint library was an alternative to three separate libraries in different locations (Flemming, 2011). While this building served both as a library and a learning center at the Vaasa
campus, it also addressed geographical and language (Swedish and Finnish) problems. However, some challenges related to management, and collection development were identified namely the lack of a joint policy for acquisition and assessment of e-resources. Some studies have dealt with the benefits of national and international resource sharing initiatives facilitated by ICT and also with socio-economic and political barriers to resource sharing (e.g. Schofield, et al, 2001; Butler, Janet Webster, Steven, Watkins, & Markham, 2006). The results from survey studies on barriers to resource sharing in UK academic libraries (Schofield et al. 2001, p. 179) identify four main barriers to collaboration and resource sharing. These include (1) those related to a lack of priority given to library development, (2) the lack of demand for change by both academic and researchers, (3) specific barriers associated to sharing resources and, (4) barriers associated with the management of change. Specific barriers include those linked to access, collection development and management, infrastructure and the storage of information and resources, staffing and library management, technical services, funding and legal issues.

In a similar vein, Butler et al. (2006) report their experience on an international network of resource sharing between members of the International Association of Aquatic and Marine libraries and Information Science Centers using shared online catalogs and facilitating interlibrary loans between the members of the association worldwide. The challenges included a large spectrum of policies among the members, the disparity of collections in terms of size and content, and on the numbers and types of users. Furthermore, staffing and library systems posed problems, as some libraries were using sophisticated commercial library systems while others used homemade library systems. As they indicate (Butler et al., 2006), one of the solutions was to harmonize the library systems into one searchable system, compatible with various catalogs. This example illustrates that resource sharing is not an easy task, but commitment and investment are key to success.

Resource sharing has advantages and disadvantages. Libraries may be able to weed their collections, to use their budgets and space more effectively and to focus more on users’ needs and also deal more effectively with preservation (Lehman, 2014; Acadia, 2016).
Disadvantages include increases in postage or shipping costs (Daly, 2015). In a report on the merger between libraries at the University of Texas Tyler (UT) and Texas A&M University, Acadia (2016) points at a dramatic weeding of half the UT library’s printed collection in order increase research and study spaces. Even if the merger was a successful joint project between the two internationally famous universities, a decrease in interlibrary loan was noted as well as a steadily diminishing budget for collection development including electronic resources, which was initially favored.

The cases of resource sharing presented above illustrate different conditions for resource sharing either between institutions at national or at international level. These conditions differ from a case to case and vary between countries depending on objectives and other interests. In most types of resource sharing, the information infrastructure plays a significant role in facilitating the movement of resources between libraries while policies, guidelines and other legal tools are important in setting up the framework for resource sharing initiatives. In this study, resource sharing is studied within one university. There are always context specific variations in problems, solutions, and advantages associated with resource sharing. The African context and the development of librarianship constitute a particular setting for resource sharing within and between academic libraries in Africa. The following section consists of a review of previous and related research on resource sharing between African universities.

### 3.5.4 Studies on resource sharing within African context

As with other aspects of African history, the development of librarianship has lagged behind (Sturges, 2015). In Africa, the topic of resource sharing has only recently been introduced and therefore relevant literature on this topic is limited (McHombu & Beukes-Amass, 2015). While in the Western world, interlibrary loan can be traced back to the 18th century (Gilmer, 1994) and greatly expanded in the 1950s (Smith, 1993), it started to be practiced in Africa in the mid-1970s (Bouazza, 1986). According to Butler et al. (2006, p. 189), “the resource sharing that is a well-established practice among libraries in developed countries, cannot be taken for granted in all libraries”.

Studies on resource sharing in African academic libraries have mainly focused on the problems and challenges faced. These challenges include underdeveloped infrastructure, political disinterest, and constant shifts in priorities, lack of staff expertise, institutional restrictions to cooperation, poor scientific impact, poor communication systems with centralized decision-making, diminishing funding and the lack of collaboration frameworks (Bouazza, 1986; Anasi & Hussaini, 2012). In the review of the literature on the challenges faced by African academic libraries in the twenty first century, Jain and Akakandelwa (2016, pp. 150-151) identified five major challenges. There are financial constraints; ICT related challenges such as poor internet connectivity and low ICT literacy levels among both library staff and users, resistance to digitalization, the challenges of open access and of inadequacies in the library and information science programs of library schools.

The traditional form of resource sharing (interlibrary loans of hard copies) is challenged, where it exists, as it takes too long for a document to reach the user, due mainly to long distances, poor infrastructure and delivery issues, but also to insufficient resources for sharing. As far as digitalization is concerned resource sharing in African academic libraries is difficult because although users appreciate the technology, its infrastructure is often too modest (Ejedafiru, 2010; Lwoga, 2014).

However, Baathuli Nfila and Darko-Ampem (2002) point out the advantages for African universities in sharing resources. They highlight the benefits of providing resources more efficiently, the increase in services and ease of access to users and a “shift from a peripheral and limited resource sharing to an integrated system-wide and formalized resource sharing” (p. 211).

Using a questionnaire survey, Dzandza and Alema (2011) studied the challenges and prospects of a consortium of academic and research libraries in Ghana. The results showed that working strategies needed improvement in order to meet the expectations of libraries.

Even if there is a literature on resource sharing in African academic libraries, little is known on libraries in Rwanda. Some reasons include
the lack of academic programs and of researchers in the field of library and information sciences (Olaka, 2008).

3.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has been devoted to a review of studies related to mergers of universities and resource sharing in academic libraries. The merger as a sociocultural issue is seen as a context presenting opportunities and challenges for library services and how resources are managed. The literature provides a view of various forms of mergers and resource sharing covering interlibrary loan in the analog through to the digital environment. The advantages of consortia resource sharing arrangements such as increased strength and power for negotiating the costs of electronic resources are taken up. Barriers to and enablers of resource sharing such as strong infrastructures are investigated as well as studies of successful mergers. The chapter also concerned the roles of libraries and librarians within HEIs working environment, including new roles, tasks, jobs, and skills prompted by technological advancement and developments in education. Finally, the literature reviewed studies on resource sharing in the African context. The literature shows that by engaging in resource sharing initiatives different academic libraries are benefitted by access to a wider range of collections and are strengthened in negotiating power with publishers. However, no substantial literature about studies addressing resource sharing as a strategy for managing academic libraries in a merger context was presented. Moreover, the literature shows that less attention was paid to the sociocultural aspects of mergers. Therefore, in this study resource sharing is viewed as strategy for managing libraries in the sociocultural context of the merger. Having reviewed previous research, the next chapter presents the sociocultural theoretical perspective, which will guide this study.
4 Theoretical framework

4.1 Introduction and overview

This chapter presents the sociocultural chosen as the theoretical framework for this study. It starts by presenting the choices and decisions made to develop a suitable theoretical perspective for the investigation. The framework serves as a lens through which the empirical data can be analyzed, and the results of the study discussed. The chapter continues with a brief introduction of the metatheoretical orientation, collectivism, and sociocultural views. The concepts from sociocultural theory which seeks to understand human action within the social context that are key to this study, i.e. situatedness and mediational means (Wertsch, 1998), are discussed in connection to the study and how they influence the analysis. Another concept that originates from sociocultural theory, Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998), is discussed and added to the theoretical framework for understanding library and resource management in the context of the merger. The chapter ends with a summary of the framework.

4.2 Theoretical starting points

Hjørland (1998) claims that metatheoretical assumptions are the basis for answers to any research question; my metatheoretical convictions informed my research design choices as well. I adhere to a collectivist approach to the world, with the assumption that “social and organizational life stem from and transpire through the real time accomplishments of ordinary activities” (Nicolini & Monteiro, 2016, p. 110), and in this research, I consider social as well as material structures that influence people’s actions. This metatheoretical orientation, which suits the complexity of the UR merger, grounded the choice of a sociocultural perspective.

There are three major situational starting points in this study. The first is investigating the ongoing process of a merger of geographically distant libraries. The second starting point is studying resource sharing as both a strategy and a practice. The third consideration relates to the strengths and weaknesses of being both a researcher of, and an employee in, the library system under study.
Considered individually, each of the three aspects could be connected to one or more theoretical approaches. However, early in the research process, I found the need to establish a theoretical perspective that allows handling these points in concert. For this purpose, sociocultural theory appeared as suitable since it serves “to understand the relationship between human action, [...] on the one hand, and cultural, institutional, and historical context on the other” (Wertsch, 1998, p. 179).

The solution was thus to choose an appropriate theoretical perspective that provides lenses that elucidate aspects related to library management and resource sharing within the merger context. More specifically, a sociocultural approach seemed to be suitable for several reasons. First, it allows consideration of both accounts and activities of participants as well as the organizational context. Second, it is appropriate to achieve the aim of this study where various aspects such as material-economic, socio-political, professional, and organizational and geo-location can enable or constrain library services and resource sharing. Finally, a sociocultural perspective helps focus on the context and the individuals in the contexts, as essential pieces in human action (Wertsch, 1998).

The overarching context of the merger may comprise decisions that libraries shift from individual and locally shaped ways of working to work as a united library operating at different sites. The achievement of such a shift implies the alignment of various sociocultural and political-economic conditions, and managing the differences between libraries such as facilities, infrastructure, and experience or professionalism of library staff, all of which can be elucidated with support from the theoretical framework.

### 4.3 Meta-theoretical orientation – Collectivism

Collectivism, which is influenced by Vygotsky (1978), is a socio-constructivist approach to knowledge creation. The emphasis is primarily on the individual’s social environment and secondly on individual's cognitive processes in producing knowledge. Thus, collectivism refers to approaches that seek to reorient the study object from individual level to social, organizational or disciplinary levels (Talja, Tuominen, & Savolainen, 2005, p. 81). It relies on assumptions that individuals construct knowledge in interaction with their
environment and that in the process both the individual and the environment are changed (p. 85). Considering this assumption, collectivism is seen as an appropriate meta-theoretical framing of studies of multiple stakeholders acting together. Here the emphasis is on the Rwandan social, economic, and cultural milieu, including past and current conditions and circumstances as well as the ambitions.

Moreover, the collectivist metatheory is appropriate for this study of how the UR libraries and resources are managed during the merger process, because resource sharing depends largely on what collectives of people trained to work in separate sites choose to do as the merger evolves. However, disruption and renegotiation of various site-specific activities are likely to be unavoidable when striving for the practices at different libraries to run smoothly in the emerging context of the merger.

4.4 A sociocultural perspective to library management and resource sharing

It is common in various social theories to overly emphasize specific aspects as determining actions (Wertsch, 1998). This can be talked about as reductionism of the messy complexity of what happens in specific real-life situations. Alternatively, a sociocultural perspective strives to avoid such reductionism and instead emphasizes relationships between individuals and their social, cultural, historical and institutional contexts to understand human actions in their full complexity (Wertsch, 1998). In other words, this approach stresses interaction and communication between actors and mediational means in social practices, the situatedness of human activity and the importance of the context where these activities are located. It is applied in, for example, information management research, but also in other subfields of LIS whereby authors take different theoretical approaches depending on the aim, the type, and the context of the study. For instance, within LIS, it was recently used to understand different practices and constructs around information management and the use of ICT (e.g. Lindh, 2017); information literacy practices (e.g. Lloyd, 2010); information seeking and professional identity (e.g. Lindberg, 2015); information sharing (e.g. Pilerot & Limberg, 2011; Forsgren, 2018; and information use (Pilerot & Lindberg, 2018).
Following this research tradition, a sociocultural perspective is used in this thesis as a way of explicating how the participants in the study understand resource sharing and how it can be enacted in the context of an ongoing merger. Before the merger, resources of various kinds were situated and organized separately at different libraries. Leadership – together with library staff that have been specifically been trained to support local academic institutions – are responsible for single and autonomous facilities and development of collections. The merger process involves various activities that are potentially disruptive, may redistribute resources, and could steer the organization per new norms that are relevant to new centralized principles. With a sociocultural perspective, it is possible to understand how connections between different actors and necessary means affect the ways resources and libraries are managed.

The key concepts of a sociocultural perspective include situatedness of human action and mediational means (e.g. Wertsch, 1998). These are important in the understanding of practice of managing libraries and resources in a merger setting involving changes of practices in both library management and library services. In this theoretical framework, I am making use of these two concepts – situatedness and mediational means – inspired by James V. Wertsch (1998), but also other interpreters of the sociocultural perspective such as Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave who provides me with the concept of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), and (professional) identity. With the help of these concepts, library management, as it takes place within the merger, and the ways in which resource sharing is understood by the study participants, are explored. Sociocultural theory has its origin in studies of how people learn together (Vygotsky, 1978), but is also extensively employed in studies of various kinds of organizations (e.g. Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002). In this thesis, it is primarily used for understanding how the study participants act and interact in an emerging organization, i.e. the merging UR.

In the subsequent sections, the different theoretical concepts applied in this study are introduced and discussed in connection to the object of the study, with a focus on establishing connections between the tenets and other concepts that are particular to this study.
4.5 Situatedness of library work and resource sharing

What people do is always situated in time, space, and context. Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 33) emphasize that the understanding of situated activity implies the consideration of mutual connections between people, activities, and the world. They emphasize that the basic claims about the concept of situatedness is grounded in the idea of “the negotiated character of meaning, and about the concerned (engaged, dilemma-driven) nature of [practice] for the people involved” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 31). The emphasis on mutual constitution also involves aspects of mutual shaping and connections between individuals, the object, and the site, rather than the duality of mind/body, cognition/action and subject/object (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011, p. 1242). When practices are seen as fundamentally situated at specific sites it becomes possible to understand the challenge of evolving practices of resource sharing and library management. Without this understanding, it would seem to be a matter of moving chess pieces on the board. However, when understanding the situatedness of human practice, it is more a matter of moving trees that have deep roots. It is not impossible to move such entrenched resources, but you need a saw and recognize that damage is being done.

Resource sharing cannot be understood without considering other phenomena such as goals and setting. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), the situatedness of activities implies the consideration of the social setting that occasioned them to make sense of the present circumstances. It can be expected that the processes of harmonization and modernization of libraries, and related activities such as relocation of staff and library collections, could have different meanings and interpretations depending on the situation prior to the merger.

The perspective of situated action in this study helps to elucidate resource management and sharing in connection to the visions and missions of the university, and to understand the (dis)connection between them. It is thus possible to situate the participants’ understandings and activities connected to resource sharing in the merger context, which can present both challenges and opportunities.
4.6 Site and (re)productivity of library work

A sociocultural approach considers human action in context. According to Schatzki (2002, p. 20), the context determines the existence of phenomenon, and refers to both the setting and the site. Schatzki (2002, p. xiv) considers the setting to include circumstances such as economic, social structures, and hierarchical distributions of power and meanings. Moreover, he considers the context as a site to be a physical place where practices are enacted through relationships and interactions in which “human coexistence inherently transpires as part of a context of a particular sort” (Schatzki, 2005, p. 467). The context in this study includes the changes linked to and occasioned by the merger process and the geographical locations of different libraries where library work and resource sharing take place. In other words, the context refers to both the circumstances and the physical site.

According to Schatzki, “the nature and transformation of social life are inherently, as well as decisively, tied to the context in which it takes place” (2000, p. 22). It is therefore important to consider the context of the merger to understand, for example, management, library work and resource sharing. Following Schatzki’s recommendation that a “certain type of context is central to analyzing and explaining social phenomena” (2005, p. 467), in this study I consider the relationships between the merger context and the practices related to library management, library work, and resource sharing as inseparable. Resource sharing is a term connected to the merger as intended to refocus management of resources previously belonging to separate institutions before the merger. In other words, each institution was managing and allocating its resources independently. There was no arrangement between institutions to share resources, nor for interlibrary loans. The notion of resource sharing was introduced in connection with the merger, which brought the institutions under the control of central management.

The library staff at different libraries expect to accomplish various types of work with the aim to provide similar standardized services to users located at various sites. In this arrangement the library work constitutes a practice, which according to Nicolini and Monteiro (2016, p. 4) can be “happening in the same time and [not necessarily] place or bound
together in harmonious or conflicting relationships”. Such relationships exist because of the connections with other practices, which also involve different activities and materials. The authors use an example of teaching as a practice that depends on, or is connected to, other practices such as cleaning classrooms and enrolling students (Nicolini & Monteiro, 2016, p. 4). With these examples, the authors show the importance of connections between different practices for the teaching to happen. Even if these examples focus on learning and teaching, this connection can also be applied (or is needed) for understanding how the UR libraries, within the merger, are supposed to provide services at different libraries and sites. This involves mediational means that can facilitate library services in different locations as well as the connections between the libraries operating at distance. In line with this example, the practice of resource sharing depends on availability of resources to be shared as well as on practices like setting up rules and guiding policies, equipping libraries with, for example, a common Library Management System (LMS).

4.7 Mediational means to library management and resource sharing

One of the most central concepts in sociocultural theory is mediational means (Wertsch, 1994). This term is defined quite broadly by Wertsch (1994), almost interchangeably with the related concept of cultural tools, and includes immaterial resources such as language and skills. According to Wertsch’s (1998) description of mediational means, they are (intellectual and material) tools that make problem solving or human action possible. With the example of pole vaulting, Wertsch (1998, p. 27) shows the importance of both the pole and the pole-vaulter in this activity. The pole-vaulting is impossible without the pole or the pole-vaulter. Moreover, as Wertsch continues, the pole-vaulter has to be skilled in using the pole to accomplish pole-vaulting. This example indicates clearly that the practice of pole-vaulting involves connections between the agent (the person), the technical tool (the pole) and the skills or intellectual ability of the agent.

Within the merger process, library services are supposed to be brought up to the level of a modern library. Such a shift requires adequate resources of different kinds, without which such a transition would be
difficult or impossible. In this study, mediational means indicates material devices and intellectual capabilities that are necessary for libraries to function as modern academic libraries within a changing learning, teaching, and research environment of a state-of-art university.

In accomplishing everyday activities, people need, use, and combine various mediational means to accomplish their work. The combination of these elements influence, in one way or another, the persistence or disappearance of a practice. According to Wertsch (1998, p. 23), there is always “irreducible tension between agent and mediational means” in that tools (material devices and intellectual capabilities) as means help the agent to achieve an action while changes in tools also imply transformation in that particular action. Mediational means are important as they are enabling or constraining humans to achieve their activities and goals.

There is a range of mediational means involved in library work and practices of managing library and resources in this study. A sociocultural perspective stipulates that mediational means are resources for individuals that shape, empower, constrain, and have the potential to transform action (Wertsch, 1993). Moreover, tools are not simply servants of the individuals’ purposes, but in many ways, transform those purposes and mediate the thinking (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995, p. 86). In line with this, Wertsch (1998, p. 23) also states “new mediational means transform mediated action”. For instance, availability of computers and internet connectivity in a library determine the services a user can get from that particular library. The ways a librarian helps a user in such circumstances are different from those in a library without internet connection. Mediational means can be site-specific, but in the context of the merger, libraries are managed as one unity and are to provide the same services to users. This means that availability or lack of mediational means at libraries can affect the (re-)productivity of services and complicate the way of managing libraries.

Mediational means are furthermore associated with power-related issues. Wertsch (1998, p. 42) claims that “the use of a particular mediational means is often based on other factors having to do with
historical precedent and with cultural or institutional power and authority”. When considering this idea in relation to the study object of this thesis, it is reasonable to assume that power inscribed in hierarchical positions will influence how libraries are managed, how resources are shared – and what can (or cannot) be performed by library staff at their workplaces.

Power is usually referred to as authority to influence and to make decisions of what to do, and when and how to act (Schatzki, 2005). In this study, power is seen as infused in organizational structure, particularly where key decisions are made through hierarchical positions. Power can also be linked to both policy documents and managerial positions, which may have the potential to regulate how libraries are to be managed and thereby enable or constrain library services.

Mediational means simultaneously shape and empower the agent in the course of accomplishing mediated action. However, such means are also modified by human agents, and their actions develop the ability and skills to deal with the tools (Wertsch, 1998). Competences and skills are subject to changes influenced by the site where a practice is enacted (Wertsch, 1998; Lloyd, 2010). In the context of the UR merger, library staff are expected to upgrade their competences and skills to meet the standards of a university aspiring to become modern. Therefore, connections between the aspirations and sociocultural tools are important to meet the target. The competences of library staff can be connected to understandings associated with the UR aspirations to be internationally recognized. These include competences and skills connected to the requirements of modern digital libraries. The competences are also connected to the situation of librarianship in the country, which can enable or constrain the development of competences. This relates to the role of the site in the enactment of a practice. As explicated by Lloyd: “from a sociocultural perspective, the notion of competence and what constitutes competent action is something which is formed and understood through a social setting in which a person enters and operates” (2010, p. 253). For instance, some participants see the lack of an educational program on librarianship in Rwanda, as mentioned in chapter two, as a hindrance to competence development of library staff. For others, the teaching requirements
toward internationalization suppose the professional developments. The two different views about competences of librarians can also have different expectations related to the meaning assigned to the library and its role.

4.8 Communities of practice and professional identity

People use language (verbal and visual) to communicate what is on their mind, to manifest their thoughts and beliefs. In the same line of argument, Schatzki’s definition of practice as “organized sets of doings and sayings” (2017, p. 128) emphasizes language as a means to accomplish actions. In this study, the participants’ understandings of, and sayings about, the practice of resource sharing can be connected to the availability of, and the connections between, necessary mediational means in the merger context.

Meanings and understandings are also linked to people’s historical background, their personal interests, and convictions, as well as their work situations. According to Wenger (1998), meaning is located in a process where it is negotiated among the participants of a particular practice. For instance, the characteristics of job positions, as well as the labeling of them, are key for understanding the meaningfulness of work. Managers can see resource sharing as a strategy to control resources (for purposes of efficiency, extension of services, and economical gain), while librarians may see it as a way to shape their identity or to meet the needs of users. In this way, it becomes possible to reason about the understanding of resource sharing in connection to professional identity.

Identity is seen as a feature of participation or belongingness to a certain group or community (Wenger, 1998). In connection to the understandings of resource sharing, library staff may need to find their place and to fit in the new organizational structure that reconfigures what has been, and still is, their workplace. Thus, librarians may strive for development of a new identity as professionals in the context of the merger so as to fit new meanings attributed to, and expectations of, being part of a larger institution compared to their previous institutions. Library staff would then, according to this line of reasoning, aspire to form a similar kind of identity to build a community of practice.
composed of people doing things together, having the same or similar sorts of competences, shared interests and experiences (Wenger, 1998).

Meaning, in this thesis, is understood as situational and linked to certain expectations, values and visions. Different meanings connected to what a library is and what value it has can be held at various hierarchical levels of an organization. For example, for most people, resource sharing is perceived as something that is intrinsically good and important and promises gains such as becoming stronger together and achieving more with fewer resources. However, when it comes to the enactment of resource sharing, judgments about the role and values of libraries can influence actions and decisions taken in relation to such a process. For instance, if libraries are seen as peripheral, that might hamper the process of sharing resources. Not being well informed on the characteristics and purposes of advanced libraries can potentially influence the understandings of resource sharing and how things should be done, when and by whom.

According to Penuel and Wertsch (1995), individual choices and cultural conditions have to work in tandem in the formation of identity. Moreover, interplays between people, mediational means, and sociocultural context have to exist to facilitate the dynamics between sociocultural processes and individuals or institutions. However, as Penuel and Wertsch (1995) put it, individuals' functioning and sociocultural processes exist in dynamic tension. This points to ways of forming communities.

According to Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) a community of practice (CoP) is “a unique combination of three fundamental elements: a domain of knowledge, which defines a set of issues; a community of people who care about this domain; and the shared practice that they are developing to be effective in their domain” (p. 27). My use of this concept is primarily concerned with and oriented towards the community dimension of a CoP, that is, how people do things in relation to each other.

In connection to professional identity formation, a sociocultural perspective highlights that individuals strive for sameness, coherence, and continuity in their actions (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). In connection
to the expected transformations of the UR libraries going from traditional free-standing libraries to an interconnected modern research library system, it is reasonable to assume that library staff will, or is supposed to, undergo an identity transformation that is connected to the goals of the university. The library staff may use their previous experience to talk about and reflect on their expectations in the new setting of modern libraries. Such transitions have a potential to engender identity shifts with the individual changing or becoming a different self by the inclusion in the community through refinement of practices as noted by Crafter and Maunder (2012). In this sense, transitions presuppose the “negotiation between individuals and the social contexts they inhabit” (Crafter & Maunder, 2012, p. 11), which sometimes involves tensions and contradictions.

The contradictions and conflicts can be linked to difficulties for individuals adapting to new social and cultural experiences caused by transitions, since such processes affect context, situations, and ways of doing things. According to Wenger (1998), a community of practice is a living context that facilitates interactions between members and thus the identity of newcomers is also shaped through participation and integration.

In the context of the UR merger, each library used to be a site of a specific CoP in which library affairs were handled locally in accordance to local institutional ways of doing things. However, any merger involves various instances when different communities fold into each other. In the merger of UR, ideals for a large unified CoP composed of all libraries have been communicated by upper management. However, a CoP tends to be site-specific and geographical distances between communities likely present obstacles. Various conflicts between, on the one hand the hierarchical top down thinking of libraries, and on the other hand that of various communities are highly visible in the empirical material. Even more striking are tensions between the different communities at geographically dispersed libraries that are now expected to work as one community.
4.9 Mutual shaping between context and mediated action

The sociocultural perspective stresses that practices unfold as situated in specific temporalities and specific conditions. According to Säljö (1996), individuals participate in different kinds of practices through “the appropriation and mastery of communicative (including conceptual) and technical tools that serve as mediational means” (p. 91). However, and accordingly, this communication depends to a substantial extent on the tools available and the affordances they provide (Pilerot & Limberg, 2011).

Mediated action is organized and shaped by different but interacting influences (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). In this study, different mediational means, such as guidelines and user identification documents which have developed locally at each individual library, are likely to create specific enactments and understandings of library work specific to the respective sites. Tools change ways of doing but also necessitate the mastery of their use (Säljö, 2010). Such locally developed mastery may not be equally valid as resources are to be used or shared across various sites, because the tools or contexts are different. Mediational means carry limitations and allowances and sometimes they can constrain or enable work and the management of work in one way or another.

4.10 Chapter summary

From what I have presented in this chapter, activities, meanings, and mediational means are situated in particular times and spaces. The connections between the theoretical concepts described in this chapter will facilitate the analysis of the empirical data. The concept of situatedness and mediational means provides devices to deal with the possibility of (re)productivity of library services and the understandings connected to the merger. They also help to understand the complexity of library management and resource sharing in the multi-site context. The key concepts of community of practice and professional identity provide analytical tools that help to explain possible tensions and contradictions in the stakeholders' understandings of the merger and the roles of the UR libraries in the merger.
5 Methodology

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the research design, the methodology, and the methods of empirical data production and analysis are discussed. The thesis focuses on elucidating library work and resource sharing among libraries of the UR from the perspectives of two groups of participants, from senior management and from those working in the libraries, so quotes were treated not as coming from individuals, but from representatives of particular positions: managers or library workers. Moreover, I elicited thoughts from every participant in the study about their experience.

Aligning with the sociocultural perspective including CoP presented in the theory chapter, a qualitative case study approach influenced by ethnography was used and is discussed in the next section including the motivations for the approach (Yin, 2003; Wildemuth, 2009) to “cover the contextual conditions” (Yin, 2003, p. 13) of the UR merger. Thereafter follows a presentation of the methods used to produce data, i.e. interviews, observations and documents study, why they have been chosen, and how they served to achieve the aims of this study. The analytical strategies applied to data produced in order to achieve the results are also presented. Furthermore, reflexivity in relation to my position and role as both a researcher and an employee of the organization under study will be discussed. This is followed by ethical considerations related to the methods used in this study. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary.

The methods used in this study are influenced by ethnography approach which strives to come closer to what people actually do (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), and enables the researcher to be in direct contact with people in their day-to-day life (O’Reilly, 2009). The sociocultural perspective, which seeks to understand human action within the social context (Wertsch, 1998) also informed the choice of the methods. Each of the methods used for producing data has its advantages and disadvantages, which are elaborated further on in this chapter. Even if according to Yin, (2003, p. 85) “no single source has a complete advantage over all the others”, interviews were used as a primary
method. This choice was mainly due to its suitability to collect qualitative data by talking to people to “access what was in, and on their minds” (Pickard, 2013, p. 196), and for “obtaining here-and-now constructions” of their activities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 268). More details about this choice are provided in the section on interviews. Interviews were supplemented by observations and document study to complement what the participants said, what they said as compared to what I observed they did, as well as to understand the challenges they face. A case study approach underpins good reasons to use multiple mixed methods of data production including interviews, observations, and existing documentation (Wildemuth, 2009) to get an in-depth description of the phenomenon in its context. In the next sections, I discuss different aspects related to methods of data production and analytical strategies.

5.2 Case study approach

A case study approach has been defined in various ways, and definitions have become blurred (Pickard, 2013, p. 101). There is also confusion about what may constitute a ‘case’ as the term is used broadly (Ragin & Becker, 1992; Wildemuth, 2009). In most of times, a case study is merely associated with qualitative research or anything else that does not fit in experimental, survey or historical methods (Pickard, 2013; Bryman, 2016).

The selection of this approach was motivated by the characteristics of the UR libraries’ merger being a contemporary occurrence for which the merger related circumstances (e.g. new experiences, infrastructural issues, and budgetary constraint) are paramount. Thus, studying library management and resource sharing separately from the merger context would make no sense at all given the inseparability of the object of the study and the context (Yin, 2003). The motivation for a case study approach was informed by Yin’s (2003) definition of a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (p. 13). Considering that aspects of library management and resource sharing are connected to the specific context or “bounded system” (Babbie, 2007; Pickard, 2013) of the...
everyday library work within the ongoing UR merger, a case study approach was found appropriate to produce data from different sources, i.e. interviews, observations, and documents. This provided access to a large spectrum of the issues of library management and resource sharing in the merger with an advantage of production of data at the sites of the participants. In addition, case study approach allows an in-depth investigation into the case as well as the inclusion of the researcher’s views (Pickard, 2013) through careful interpretation and reflection (cf. Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 9). Another advantage linked to this approach is the potential for theory development (Neuman, 2014, p. 42; Schwandt & Gates, 2018, p. 341).

Besides advantages, there are also drawbacks related to case study approach. The most cited disadvantages include a lack of, or limited, generalizability of results; concerns about time and (the large amount of) data produced; and possible bias (Babbie, 2009, p. 298; Pickard, 2013, p. 109; Bryman, 2016, p. 62). However, according to Yin (2003, p. 10) “case studies […] are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes”. In this argument, Yin (2003) emphasizes the advantages of qualitative research through the analytical generalization compared to quantitative research, which mainly takes on statistical generalization. Moreover, without competing with quantitative approach, a qualitative approach helps to reach an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and the setting through verbal interpretation of real life situation (Silverman, 2014).

5.3 Research methods for data production

The case study approach warrants the use of multiple methods for data collection. Thus, data were produced using interviews, observations, and document study. The first step in the data production was to select the sites and recruit the participants to the study. Data were produced between June 2015 and July 2017 and was done in two rounds in 15 UR libraries located on nine (9) campuses. For the first round of data production, the interviews with senior managers and library managers were done in the earlier stage of the merger, in 2015-2016. For the second round, only library staff/librarians participated and data production took place nine months after the first round of data production, in 2016-2017.
It is important to note that the logistics of data production in two rounds during different periods of time no doubt affected the views among participants about library management and resource sharing. The differences were noted between the two groups of participants. The interviews with managers at an early stage of the merger process yielded more optimistic views of library management and resource sharing with regard to the merger. These views differ from the situation at libraries almost one year later where library staff expressed more pessimistic views of library management and resource sharing. This is elaborated in the result chapters and the discussion.

Getting a range of views by visiting the various libraries was facilitated by my experiences as a researcher and an employee at one of the libraries. Visiting multiple libraries was an additional strategy to step away from experiences as an insider and an outsider. This enabled the zooming in and out on empirical data as a strategy to mediate between being an embedded and distanced researcher, i.e. an employee of the studied institution and a researcher.

The following sections discuss the methods used to produce data for this study starting from selection of participants through the process of data analysis.
5.3.1 Site of the study and location of libraries

This section consists of tables and text descriptions of the visited UR libraries.

![Table 1: Sites of data production](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus and location (province)</th>
<th>Type of library/department</th>
<th>Number of staff at the library</th>
<th>Number of students at campus 2015-2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Huye (Southern)</td>
<td>Main</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School of law</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School of medicine and pharmacy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School of management and economics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School of applied science</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rusizi (Western)</td>
<td>Main</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busogo (Northern)</td>
<td>Main</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyagatare (Eastern)</td>
<td>Former institute of agriculture</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School of nursing and midwifery</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rukara (Eastern)</td>
<td>Main</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kibungo (Eastern)</td>
<td>School of nursing and midwifery</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyarugenge (Kigali city)</td>
<td>College of Medicine and Health Science (Main)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College of Science and Technology (Main)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remera (Kigali city)</td>
<td>College of Education (Main)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gikondo (Kigali city)</td>
<td>College of Business and Economics (Main)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4831</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Sites of data production

The libraries visited are geographically distant from each other except those in Kigali City. In addition to a geographical distance, they are also different in terms of number of staff, which reflects other differences such as collection size, number and category of users and academic programs at their places. For instance, the number of students is illustrated in Table 1, column 4.

The number of staff available in a library was a basis for recruitment of participants to the study. The ideal was to have at least one participant from each campus or college library. Thus, in a library where only one staff member was working, the person was invited to participate.

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regardless of any other criteria (as described in the following section). The library with no staff (marked zero in the third column, Table 1) was not operational due to lack of staff. However, I had a chance to access the library premises, the collection, and reading space, and interviewed two participants in the category of managers at this campus.

5.3.2 Selection and recruitment of participants

While recruiting participants for this study, my position as a UR staff was an advantage because most of participants were familiar to me, especially library staff and library directors. However, at every site there were gatekeepers to help me to get in touch with participants. In most cases, I enlisted the help of the reception or secretariat offices of the college or campus or library directorate offices.

Case study research “always uses purposive sampling” (Pickard, 2013, p.104). To recruit participants for the study, the purposive sampling method was used to select the participants in accordance with the research questions and the characteristics of target groups (Wildemuth, 2009). The purposive method was used as a “strategy to select the most information-rich participants” (Wan & Peterson, 2007, p. 686), who were selected based upon their experience in the institution (employees of the merged institutions) and their level of involvement in the merger process. In other words, after getting information on the number, job positions and profile of the targeted staff and members of senior management, I selected people whose experience best met the interests of the study. Moreover, purposive sampling also intended to maximize the scope of information to be gained (cf. Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Two groups of participants were selected as key informants, i.e. a group of senior managers and a group for those working in the libraries. Further purposive sampling was used within these groups deep into different subgroups. The participants were chosen according to their professional or job positions at the UR, and not according to any other aspect such as gender, employment status (temporary or permanent), friendship, or other factors.

I strove to include senior managers and library directors because their positions entitled them to high positions within the decision-making structure, and they were assumed to be more or less able to influence
policies, and to be well informed about the merger. However, in the course of the field work, I was informed by library directors that they were no longer part of the decision making group (or at least they were not invited to any managerial meeting as before the merger) in the UR structure. However, I decided to maintain the subgroups as initially planned, because library staff considered library directors not as peers, rather their line managers. The category of librarians/library staff was chosen as one performing library activities on a daily basis. They are more likely to be involved in library activities and hold information about activities and practices at the libraries and related challenges and problems.

Regarding the recruitment of senior managers (which included the UR deputy vice chancellors and research director, colleges principals, and college research directors), 12 out of 19 people contacted agreed to participate in the study and were interviewed. After recruitment, the group of senior managers was composed of two UR senior managers (at headquarters), six senior managers of colleges and campus, and four colleges’ research directors. The directors of research were included in this group of senior managers, because they had been involved in the merger process from the very beginning, as they are more or less recognized as management rather than as library workers.

The term senior manager used in this thesis follows Mintzberg’s (2009, pp.10-15) definition of different categories of managers, but also fits the UR categorization of staff. According to this, the category of managers “runs from senior managers [or decision-makers] to the first-line supervisors” who are in charge of a number of [workers] to form a basic organizational unit (p.14). In the UR case, the senior management group includes the office of Vice Chancellor, and Principals of Colleges while first-line managers, or the category of supervisors, comprises library directors and research directors.

Within the libraries group, two subgroups of participants were identified and recruited. These are library directors/representatives and librarians/library staff. The subgroup of library directors consisted of the six directors initially targeted. However, as mentioned earlier, the UR colleges and campuses are scattered countrywide, and not every library had a director. Thus, for a better representation of libraries, I
also included five librarians heading campus libraries. This subgroup of participants will be referred to as library managers. In total 11 people out of 15 contacted for this subgroup participated in the study.

The recruitment of library staff took into consideration the differences in libraries, their number and location in different campuses. It was important to consider each library as unique in the setting of the merger. Consequently, at least one or two library staff were selected from each library to participate in the study. As shown in Table 1, in some libraries, one or two librarians work there. In total, all the 20 library staff/librarians who were contacted agreed to participate.

The participants were recruited using an invitation letter addressed to them (see Appendix 1), followed up by phone calls and email. The following table illustrates the number of participants and allocation to their respective groups, and the time of data production.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Subgroups</th>
<th>Number of interviews and period</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior management</td>
<td>UR senior managers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College and campus research directors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries</td>
<td>Library directors and library representatives</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library staff/librarians</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Distribution of participants in their groups

Before the interviews, each participant read the informed consent form and agreed freely to participate in the research.
5.3.3 Interviews

The interview method was chosen as a primary method of research inquiry for its various advantages, though drawbacks are also noted. Interview research “attempts to understand the world from subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p.1). It helps to get different views as each participant expresses in their own words on the topic of interest to both the interviewee and the researcher. In this study, interviews offered various insights from participants recruited from different sites where the institution has campuses. Another advantage of interviewing, as Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 273) put it, is that it “offers the respondents the possibility to move back and forth in time in their narratives to reconstruct their past experiences, activities and expectations for the future”. In this sense, through interviews, it was useful for me to hear participants expressing their feelings about library work and resource sharing in the merger context compared to their previous experiences in their former institutions, but also with regard to their expectations. Even if it is impossible to predict the future of resource sharing, interviews helped participants to reconstruct the past, to interpret the present, and to speculate about the future (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 273) of their libraries. During interviews, participants refreshed and shared their memories of the process of the merger and most of the salient steps they passed through. The participants were also able to reconstruct and recount stories about their work and different activities in libraries at different sites.

Different forms of interviews are possible, of which structured, semi-structured and focus group interviews are the most commonly used (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Pickard, 2013). The choice of type of interview depends on the researcher’s experience, the nature of research topic, the sort of data to be produced and the time available, but also the number of participants and the analysis strategies (Pickard, 2013). The setting of the study was another factor determining the choice of the type of interview to be used. The merger of libraries being an ongoing activity which affects staff placement, participants were assumed to be most comfortable expressing their views while in individual (one on one) conversations with the researcher at their workplace rather than in a group. Thus, participants are thought to be able to reveal their
personal, private self, feelings and thoughts (cf. Atkinson & Silverman, 1997, p. 309). This motivated the choice of individual interviews instead of focus groups interviews. Moreover, as mentioned above, libraries are understaffed, with only one or two people working in a location. This was another reason for using one on one interviews instead of focus group interviews that require gathering six to ten people (Pickard, 2013, p. 243), which would have been impossible to arrange. Even at libraries with more than five personnel, they were working in shifts that would have precluded group interviews. Consequently, face-to-face interviews were the most convenient and appropriate. Finally, interviewing participants at their workplace was also an opportunity for the researcher to get to know the site for observations later on.

A semi-structured interview type was used. As Pickard (2013, p. 199) notes, a semi-structured interview is used to “gain holistic understanding of the thoughts and feelings of the interviewee, [and] learn about their point of view”. This method was chosen mainly because neither the researcher nor the participants are limited in regards to pre-established answers to questions. But rather, the researcher was able to change or adapt the questions to the interview situation or use following-up questions for the sake of deepening understanding in relationship to the research questions and individuals' experiences. Semi-structured interviewing relies on the researcher talking with participants about predetermined topics and issues (connected to research questions) with the help of a prepared interview guide to keep track of research questions and capture all relevant information from participants.

In this study, an interview guide (see Appendix 5) was used to supply a basic structure during interviews. The interview guide consisted of four themes and questions related to: (1) understandings of academic libraries; (2) the UR libraries in the merger; (3) resources; and (4) resource sharing in the merger. The interview guide was customized to different sub-groups of participants. Even when the questions were almost the same, however, title or job positions were adapted to the interviewee’s situation and responsibilities. Interviews were conducted at the workplace of the respondent or any other place that suited them better. The statements on participants’ experience, their activities and their opinions, in relation to academic libraries in the merger and
resource sharing were recorded using a voice recorder for transcription and translation later on. More details on transcription of sound recordings are given in the section on analytical strategies (cf. section 5.4).

The setting of interviews was as spontaneous as possible for all the participants. The principle was not to provide the interview guide to the participants beforehand. Giving the questions in advance could allow people time to contemplate and remember things, however, due to logistic reasons (availability of internet connectivity and time constraints), the participants did not have to prepare for responses. Consequently, one of the persons decided not to participate after I declined to provide an interview guide as they requested.

Due to the diversity of spoken languages and different levels of English among the participants, they were asked to choose a suitable language for interviews. Thus, three languages, Kinyarwanda, French, and English were used to produce data. There are problems linked to the use of different languages. There were instances of losing the original meaning when translating from Kinyarwanda and French to English. I would say that through translation from French or Kinyarwanda, some of the original meanings or information might have been deflated or overstated. The reasons for this mostly include a lack of corresponding terms and expressions in the English language, and the differences in cultures and traditions entailed.

Even if this interview method presents advantages, drawbacks are noted when it comes to power-struggles and relations between interviewee and interviewer. The interviewer is the one having control over the discussion and the interviewee might be disempowered (Pickard 2013, p.33). However, during the interviews, I did my best to make the participants feel comfortable and thus we had an interactive conversation. Often participants asked questions for clarifications about the research questions and the merger. Sometimes, provocative questions about my take on and experiences about the merger were also asked. In most cases, participants wanted to go beyond the research questions. I had to smoothly redirect them back on track and guide the conversation as a master of the “craft” of interviewing, to use Kvale & Brinkmann’s (2009) term. In this way, during interviews, I fostered a
conversational atmosphere, which according to Denzin & Lincoln (2018, p. 581) constitutes a point for successful interviewing. For those who wanted to extend the conversation beyond the research (as colleagues), we arranged extra talks during lunch breaks or after work. Their questions to some extent helped me to reformulate the questions during interviews and provided rich information on some aspects of the merger, especially that they had been continuously in the merger process longer than I.

Moreover, interview research cannot provide “the mirror reflection of the social world [as expected, but rather] it can provide access to the meanings people attribute to their experiences and social worlds” (Miller & Glassner, 2016, p. 53). This means that interviews alone cannot be enough to provide a deep understanding in a study where other aspects (e.g. activities, materials) are taken into consideration. As Gherardi (2012) puts forth, “interviews in a work practice is a blunt instrument because the researcher mainly access what the interviewee thinks about his/her doings, what he/she can and wants to say, but not the complexity, the situated and tacit knowledge, and the collective dimension or practicing” (p. 164). The role of the researcher is important in making interviews meaningful for research purposes. It is in this line that as Czarniawski (2007) suggests that it necessitates a combination with other techniques of data production such as observations or any other methods in order for interviews to yield fruitful results, other methods supplemented interviews in this study.

In addition to interviews, other methods were also used. The next section consists of methodological considerations regarding observation.

5.3.4 Observations
Observation is broadly defined by Adler and Adler (1994) as “the act of noting a phenomenon, often with instruments, and recording it for scientific or other purposes” (p. 378). Observations are carried out in order to provide evidence of the “here and now”, to discover how people behave and interact in particular situations (Pickard, 2013, p. 225) with a primary purpose of finding out what people do (Wildemuth, 2009). Moreover, observations allow the researcher to investigate a phenomena in a natural setting and context from various perspectives
(Neuman, 2006). Accordingly, observations were done to complement participants’ statements from interviews in relation to what they do, and what challenges and constraints they face in connection to resource sharing.

Types of observations include participant observation, semi-participant, and non-participant observation. I chose to use semi-participant observations based on two interconnected aspects. First, because the sites of observations were scattered and dispersed over different places, it was convenient for me to have time in between to move from one place to another. Second, the time was limited considering the number of libraries for which observations were planned. Consequently, this reduced the time of observations dedicated to each library.

There are problems and limitations associated with the use of observations as a method, such as effects or influence of the observer on the observed and the issues of subjectivity (Adler & Adler, 1994). In addition, Yin (2009, p. 102) notes that observations can be costly, time consuming and can also lead to selectiveness or require a large team to allow a large coverage. In order to minimize the effects of these problems, in addition to participants being informed and having agreed to be observed, I tried not to interfere by being quiet and observing unobtrusively. I neither asked questions nor clarifications to the participants during the observations as to avoid manipulation, stimulation, or influence participants, as Adler and Adler (1994) recommend. Rather details and clarifications were requested after the observations if needed. However, I took some pictures (whenever needed) during the observations as evidence of activities and situations connected to what was being observed as events unfolded. Of course, I cannot claim to have succeeded completely in overcoming the impacts of this method on the observed, because in addition to my being ‘a co-worker’, the fact of informing participants itself influences the actions, movement and behavior of the observed.

The participants were invited and notified about practicalities before they consented to participate in observations. The observations were planned after interviews and performed the next day, or any other day, but not on the same day as the interviews. This was according to the availability of the participants and their working schedules. Selected
participants were observed in their duties at different time of the day and in various activities. Observations consisted mainly on interactions with both humans (between participants themselves, and with library users) and materials (equipment). As the observations were done mainly in the mid-term holidays for students, few users were coming to libraries.

I have been in libraries with staff for some hours in their activities sometimes engaging in short conversations to ask for clarifications trying to know what was going on. The time of observation varied from one participant to another and place to place depending on the type of concerned activity. The observation was done in five libraries. The average of observation time was five hours per library, sometimes all at once, otherwise in two different sessions and with different participants. The total time spent in libraries for observation amounted to twenty-five hours. During observations, I did not use an observation guide or observation-briefing sheet as described in research methodology books (e.g. Pickard, 2013, p. 231) as it was for the interviews, but I was interested in library activities including front-end and back-end services. Thus, I was not bound by predetermined conceptions. Rather, I had the opportunity to freely use my faculties to gather impressions and happenings in the surroundings of the observed activities (Adler & Adler, 1994), which informed the analysis. In doing so, the focus was on interaction between library staff and users, what the interaction consisted of, and what equipment and tools involved and the setting. In connection to back-end services, the interest was on what they were doing.

I did observations in five libraries, two computerized and three manually led libraries. Inside computerized libraries, I observed library staff in the process of recording new acquired books into a library management software, lending-borrowing process and information search support to users at reference/information desks. One occurrence of a staff participating in an online meeting was also observed. In other libraries, I observed staff doing different activities including statistics for library usage and circulation of books in a manual system, activity reporting and book shelving. I observed also library staff retrieving books from shelves for users and circulation process.
Even though the observed activities were similar in some ways, from the first observations to the next, there were new aspects to observe, especially the observed people, the setting, as well as the tools and equipment that were different from one observation to another. This yielded rich information to supplement interviews mainly about the difference in ways of working, equipment in libraries, competences of staff and related challenges in different working contexts. The similarities in libraries influenced the taking of notes from observations.

During observations, I have taken notes and pictures when I thought it would be useful to show particularities, similarities or differences in the libraries. Some of them are used as illustrations in the results chapters. In some cases, notetaking was continued after acquiring clarifications from the observed participant. The focus while taking notes was mainly on differences between libraries, what was lacking and or additional or unusual scenes happening like equipment failure (for example, due to electricity cuts or internet disconnections) in the course of the observed activity and interaction with users. During my observation time at a particular library, the notetaking was not focused on every single detail but rather on activities that appeared special or interesting. I used a pencil to take notes because it was easy to include clarifications whenever needed after the observation was completed.

The notes from observations informed the results of the interviews mainly by adding details and clarifications. Observations helped to describe the various activities and context of libraries. A part of the notes including pictures was used in the writing of the results chapters, especially for commenting on various accounts from participants.

In addition to interviews and observations, documents were also collected and studied.

5.3.5 Documents

Documents are seen as tools which have the capacity to inform, regulate, recommend and limit both practices and expectations (Smith & Schryer, 2008). Policy documents state who is supposed to do what, how and when, though in some cases, even quite often, what people do differs from what documents stipulate. Documents have also a significant role in the management of organizations and institutions but
also in the culture and the continuity of society’s activities (Smith & Schryer, 2008), as they can tell people what to do (Silverman, 2016). According to Yin (2003, p. 87), documents are often sources of evidence of activities and events but they should not be treated as “literal recordings of events that have taken place” but rather be “used to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” (Yin, 2003, p. 87). In addition to that, documents are not “transparent representations of organizational routines, decision-making process, or professional diagnosis” (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004, p.58). Therefore, they do not speak for themselves, but rather, the role of the researcher is to make them speak (Silverman, 2014). Documents collected for this study were studied in relation to the results from interviews and observations. The aim was to see how they or do not support and in what ways they help or hinder achieving the activities related to practices of sharing resources among the studied libraries.

In this study, various types of documents were used as empirical resources. The different types of documents were used to support interviews in order achieve the aim of study. The documents collected to be used for empirical material included administrative documents purposively selected to inform library work, library staff and resources. They included:

- Library policy documents from merged institutions;
- Library staff job profiles as an example were collected from one library as a representation of all libraries, as they were similar;
- The UR library organizational chart (from the UR website);
- The UR strategic plan;
- The UR staff development plan 2014-2024;
- Reports, i.e. Facts and Figures 2015 and 2018. It is important to note that the report for 2018 was included later towards the end of data analysis.
With those documents, together with findings from interviews and observations, it was possible to shed light on the situations around (enablers and constraints) what the library staff do and what they say that they do. The empirical materials were used to supplement interviews and observations throughout the thesis, but especially for the writing of Chapter 8 to support the sayings about challenges to library work and resource sharing in different libraries.

5.4 Analytical strategies

This section on analytical strategies consists of ways used to work with data collected from empirical materials, starting with transcription. Data analysis followed a thematic, and interpretative approach derived from qualitative content analysis (QCA), specifically constant comparative analysis (Wildemuth, 2009). Content analysis as an analytical tool has been used in a variety of research applications in information and library science (cf. Allen & Reser, 1990; Chu, 2015). Wildemuth (2009) notes that QCA was seen as a tool to address the weaknesses of content analysis which was primarily used as a quantitative research method. As Wildemuth (2009, p. 308) continues, QCA has been defined, according to other scholars, as:

- “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278);
- “an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step-by-step models, without rash quantification” (Mayring, 2000, p. 2);
- “any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings (Patton, p. 453).

Drawing on these definitions, Wildemuth (2009) notes that QCA does not seek to counting and extracting words content from texts in order to examine meanings, themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text, rather it allows the researcher to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific manner (p. 306). In addition, Kohlbacher (2006) recognizes QCA to be built upon the systematic
development of categories or themes from data and is more toward a theory-guided approach to data analysis. Consequently, QCA is appropriate to this study guided by a sociocultural perspective.

Constant comparative analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which is a strategy that compares each piece of data to develop analytic conceptualization, and distinctions or similarities (Pickard, 2013, p. 269) helped to compare texts assigned to each category but also to integrate categories and their properties through the development of interpretive notes (Wildemuth, 2009, p. 311). Even if this approach is mainly used for the theory generation in connection to the grounded theory methodology of Glaser and Strauss (1967), its use in this study does not conflict. This because of the combination of theory and empirically based driven analysis though the theoretical approach was decided prior to engaging in the field for data production.

The data analysis started from the first interview, i.e. data production and analysis were iterative and ongoing mainly because transcriptions were engaged with after interviews every day. Moreover, the participants and I had the opportunity to put on additional information whenever needed mainly through informal conversations, but also short messages and emails that were incorporated during the period of data production. Data analysis was carried out systematically in an iterative process with a constant scrutiny of empirical materials (transcripts, field notes, documents and photos). The data analysis was empirically based and theoretical informed whereby research questions were the base of analysis and the theoretical lens was used to make sense of the data. Different empirical materials (interview transcripts, field notes, and documents) were approached differently. Information in the interviews were categorized in accordance to the theoretical concepts established in the theory chapter while field notes and documents were used as support in some instances.

The analysis is an important step in research to make sense of empirical data. The analysis prioritized the meaning of what was said rather than extraneous language (cf. Riessman, 2005, p. 2). The emphasis was to gain a meaningful sense of participants’ statements and their activities. The interview transcripts are narratives accounts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 522) of the participants who present their experiences and
attitudes, which left on their own could not make any sense to the study. Rather the interpretation/analysis was important in order to present meaningful results from this study. Accordingly, the analysis of data passed through different iterative stages in an interpretive way to construct and present the results of the study.

5.4.1 Transcription and coding

The first step of data analysis was transcription of interviews. The form of transcriptions was chosen according to different factors including the purpose of the investigation, the nature of the material and the time (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Interviews were transcribed verbatim or were summarized in light of the research questions. Verbatim transcription was done for records with quotes to be used as supporting excerpts in empirical chapters, while summaries were done for some passages in the data, which were to some extent related to the topic just as clarifications but not quite relevant to any particular questions of this study. During transcriptions, instance of pauses, hesitation or voice level (as to signify insistence or any other feeling such as hopelessness, hesitation) by participants were not marked in the transcripts. A total number of 43 recorded interviews of 2880 minutes, which resulted in around 700 pages of interview transcripts.

Transcription of data was accompanied by the creation of themes and the generation of key words or groups of words in relation to research questions. The analysis was carried out in three stages.

Stage One:

*Open coding* started with data production and during transcription or preparation of the data. At this stage, I approached data with an open mind in an exploratory way, trying to find out what the data was about. I read and re-read interview transcripts, and themes/categories emerged. On print-outs of transcripts (or on electronic documents), while reading, line-by-line, I highlighted data related to the aim of the study and research questions. While reading transcripts, occurrence (though it is a not a quantitative research) was an aspect to consider for constructing themes/categories according to what was said and in connection to the theory. Thereafter, categories were sorted into groups of similar or related sayings and phenomena were categorised under the
corresponding themes. The themes were related to research questions and the theory. The themes that emerged were:

- Understandings of the merger;
- Understandings of resource sharing;
- Practices and activities in libraries;
- Opportunities and expectations from the merger;
- Challenges and constraints connected to the merger;
- Enablers and solutions to challenges and problems connected to resource sharing.

Stage Two:
Subcategories were also created progressively and iteratively, via axial coding to link the categories to their sub-themes and establish relationships. The focus was moved from individual transcripts to themes and a more specific analysis.

Stage Three:
The final stage consisted of application of the theory to the categories and sub categories for a deep analysis. The following table is an example of how the coding was done. This is an example of a participant’s account from interview transcripts extracted from the code book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/Category</th>
<th>Challenges and constraints to resource sharing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme</td>
<td>Resources and competences of libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Scarcity of resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Scarcity of ICT equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td><em>With a manual system we use for circulation, it is not easy to track a book when you do not find it on shelves. We cannot know whether it is on loan and identify the borrower or if it is lost (Library Staff).</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Example of thematic analysis of empirical data

From the category, which is more general to the example of an excerpt from the interview transcript with a participant (i.e. library staff in this example), this example illustrates the process used to reach the results
presented in empirical Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9, through the application of the theory.

5.4.2 Theory application and knowledge generation

Data from all empirical materials, i.e. interviews, field notes, follow up communications through emails, photos and documents were combined in a complementary way in order to produce the results and draw the conclusions presented in Chapter 11 (cf. Wildemuth, 2009). The key concepts of the sociocultural approach as established in the theory chapter were applied to the themes and subthemes in order to establish relationships as well as in the interpretations of participants’ statements. The talks and conversations of the two groups of participants, i.e. senior managers and library staff, were used together to illustrate contradictions or similarities in the results.

5.5 Reflexivity

My role as both a researcher and a member in the setting of the study can be an advantage and a disadvantage in both interviews and observations. It could be an advantage, because I am familiar with the context, and don’t need, for example, to become acquainted with the normal processes. This could also be a disadvantage in case of over-rapport (over relationship) with respondents (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), or when I become over involved, this could lead to loss of objectivity (Pickard, 2013). My presence as a colleague or a line manager (at one of the colleges’ library) may affect negatively or positively on the way the participants perform their work. Different scenarios are possible: (1) participants may inhibit some usual practices or activities in order to please me, or (2) they may also perceive me as a judge, who can contradict them because perhaps we see things differently. Thus, in order to not influence participants (though not easy at all), I avoided suggesting possible answers to the participants while performing interviews and observations. Again, it was impossible to observe as a complete outsider and not influence the situation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 226). However, the insiders-outsiders approach helped me to stand in both positions. I regard myself as in-between the insider and outsider. I am an insider because I am part of the UR, especially at the campus I belong to and where I am quite
familiar with the in-house situation compared to the other colleges or campuses.

On the one hand, being an insider and thus knowing the circumstances of the UR helped to understand the meaning of what was being said by participants. It also lead to a clear and analytical discussion of results. This can recall to the asymmetry of the power relations in interviewing (cf. Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Being an insider, can also be a threat because some respondents can withhold information assuming that I am aware of it. In some cases during interviews, participants refrained themselves from describing the situation at libraries and the merger presuming that I knew the in-house realities. Therefore, in most cases, follow-up questions were asked to further probe the participants’ statements.

On the other hand, as an outsider, it is possible for the researcher to see features that would not be seen as an insider. For instance, the time off while undertaking studies in Sweden has helped me to see aspects in the study that I would risk not seeing if I had been there at the UR all the time. The time spent in Sweden for studies in between the sequences of data production was invaluable, because I shifted from being insider to a kind of outsider (cf. Evered & Louis, 1981; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Nevertheless, the two hats of mine contributed to my understanding and interpretation of data. This refers mainly in taking distance from empirical data by zooming in and out in the empirical data for better understanding and interpretation, and presentation of the results more objectively.

My role as a researcher and a member of the UR staff influenced my ways of looking at the data, how to go about analyzing it, and determining what to communicate and what to leave out. Being in such a position helped me as a researcher to be regularly informed about the changes in the institution. Of course, some changes and initiatives occurred after the period of fieldwork and data production, which are not included in this thesis.

5.6 Credibility and trustworthiness of the research

A qualitative research approach differs in many ways from a quantitative approach. Consequently, criteria for judging qualitative
research results are also different (Bradley, 1993). According to Wildemuth (2009), there is no universal agreed upon terminology to assess the quality of qualitative research. The quality of this research work is looked at through the four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I strived to meet the criteria in each step of this research as recommended in qualitative methodology books (e.g. Wildemuth, 2009; Pickard, 2013).

Credibility refers to “adequate representation of the construction of the social world under study” (Wildemuth, 2009, p. 313). In order to enhance credibility and minimize subjectivity of research, one practice is to checking findings with participants as noted by Lincoln and Guba (1985). However, due to time constraints and language barriers, it was not possible to share findings to participants to get feedback, though that had not been promised at the start of the research. Avoiding subjectivity in research data analysis can be difficult (Pickard, 2013), however, there is a possibility to reduce bias and compensate, especially when the researcher is aware of it. In my roles as both a researcher and an employee of the studied institution, the credibility of this research was achieved by minimizing the personal bias and subjectivity in data analysis and interpretation of results as Pickard (2013) recommends. Credibility in this study was helped by carefully reflecting on possible prejudices throughout the process of data analysis. The credibility was also strengthened by using multiple sources of data production (interviews, observations, and documents study) as a way to compensate for limitations of each method as recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985). I strived for objectivity by letting data talking and interpreted through the application of the theoretical devices.

Transferability in this study was achieved by providing a thick and clear description and detailed documentation of the research process, i.e. data production and use of methods, and reporting, and thus can be replicated in other research (Bryman, 2016). The instruments used in this study to produce data, such as the interview guide provided in Appendix 5, which can be replicated in other research.

Dependability, which refers to the coherence and consistency of the study process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), was achieved through
transcription, coding and analysis of empirical data in light of the theoretical lens and previous related studies.

Confirmability, or objectivity, refers to the extent to which others can confirm the characteristics of the data presented in this study. Bryman (2016) recognizes that “complete objectivity is impossible. However, it has to be apparent that the researcher has not overtly allowed personal values or theoretical inclinations to sway the conduct of the research and the findings deriving from it” (p. 386). In this research, this is evident in the entire process from formulation of research questions through interviews and observations, data analysis, and interpretation of the results, and evidenced by quotes from the participants in the empirical chapters.

As a researcher, I also followed a code of conduct, practice, and norms. In the next section, I ponder these ethical aspects.

5.7 Ethical considerations
This section is about ethical aspects that I followed throughout the study. First, I describe the organizational and administrative requirements that were fulfilled prior to starting the field work. Second, are considerations related to methods of data production in the field such as during the interview and observation processes, and my approach to using the documents as empirical materials. Third, are ethical issues connected to data analysis and the use of the data in writing and publishing the results.

5.7.1 Organizational and administrative related ethical issues
The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical research guidelines and procedures of the UR and the research policy in place in Rwanda through the Ministry of Education. With these guidelines, it was compulsory to have a research approval from both the teaching university, The University of Borås in my case, and from the UR research directorate. The certificates to conduct research were issued by the University of Borås through the supervisor and by the College Research Directorate at the UR (Appendices 3 and 4). These certificates served as introductory and explanatory documents to the participants.
5.7.2 **Methods oriented ethical considerations**

An informed consent form (see Appendix 2) was understood and signed by the participants and me, the researcher, to outline and observe the rules of confidentiality, and as evidence of freely offered participation in the research project. My relationships with participants, especially with library staff who were colleagues of mine, is also an ethical issue that needed to be addressed. In this regard, the code of practice was that I passed through gatekeepers to reach participants. This includes that prior to meeting the library staff I talked to their line managers, i.e. library directors to notify them of my presence in the library. Regarding the relation to the participants, during interviews and observations, I assumed the role of a researcher rather than the role of a member of the UR staff.

**5.7.3 Data analysis, reporting and publication**

Regarding individuals’ privacy and security, empirical materials are saved on a computer separate from the codes or names of participants, and these materials have been used only for the research purpose. Furthermore, the names of places and other information that would make the participant identifiable have been concealed throughout this thesis. The participants were guaranteed confidentiality by the use of pseudonymization in the data analysis, discussion and results. Although pseudonymization can be effective, in some instances some participants may be recognizable by their style of speech. Therefore, it is difficult to guarantee full confidentiality and anonymity, as noted by Pickard (2013, p. 93). However, I have removed the possibility of tracking a quote to a particular participant by removing, for example, special style of speech identifiable in some of the participants’ statements used in result chapters. Furthermore, I strived to provide privacy by mediating the personal data through theoretical perspectives.

**5.8 Chapter summary**

This chapter has presented the methodological choices for this study. It started by motivating the choice of a case study approach and related methods of data production. The analytical strategies applied to the empirical data were described followed by the aspects related to reflexivity issues, credibility and trustworthiness established throughout this study. Then ethical aspects connected to each method
were also presented. The results produced with the help of these methods are presented in subsequent chapters.
Part II: RESULTS, INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The findings of the study are presented in four empirical chapters, which are connected to the research questions. Chapter 6 deals with different perspectives of the merger and understandings about resource sharing by participants in the context of the merger. The focus is on opportunities and challenges emanating from the merger as a setting and problems and challenges connected to tools and equipment involved in the practices of sharing resources. Chapter 7 presents practices identified at libraries from the perspectives of participants and at the same time sheds light on resource sharing from studying different steering documents. The documents include those collected from UR libraries and website but also data produced by the researcher in collaboration with participants during the study. Chapter 8 deals with challenges connected to managing and sharing resources at distance. Chapter 9 deals with solutions suggested by participants to potential problems and challenges identified in the three previous chapters.

Throughout the results chapters, accounts from individual participants have identification codes as shown in the following example: SM, LM, and LS. Participants are referred to in terms of groups and subgroups. There are two groups, a group of managers and a group for libraries. The latter is composed of two subgroups: library staff or librarians, and library managers/directors. The groups and subgroups of participants are abbreviated as follows and used throughout the thesis:

- SM refers to senior manager;
- LM refers to library manager (library directors and library representatives); and
- LS stands for library staff.

In order to set the analysis in context, the following section gives a brief description and background of the UR libraries before presenting the results.

The UR campuses and colleges are dispersed nationwide. Before the merger, a director was managing a library at each institution, whether
having one single library or different branch libraries within the same campus. A library used to have its own policies regarding, for example, collection development, circulation, weeding and disposal, working hours, etc. and ways of managing staff, equipment, and facilities. Libraries were semi-autonomous entities within their institutions in a specific geographical part of the country. They had budgets and organizational ways of handling daily affairs as well as partnerships. Each library was servicing a specific set of educational programs and research projects.

In the current setting of the merger, libraries are, compared to each other, different in various aspects such as the size of the library, equipment, library collection, skills of staff, and working routines as shown in the results. As the libraries are to work together, under one unit, the diversity of collections, competences of staff and working routines could be favorable conditions for complementarity and collaboration between libraries. However, there is a clear distinction between libraries’ sizes and status and between geographical location and location in organizational chart.

Considering that libraries are to help the university in achieving its mission and internationalization, including research support and visualization of research results, the participants emphasized a need for harmonization of working routines, equipment and staffing in order to reach certain standards as expressed in the results. The UR libraries are in transformation. In terms of the re-productivity of the library services at different sites, libraries need to be harmonized according to same standards as well as cataloging systems and practices in order to be able to provide the same services and share resources. This implies technological leapfrogging to reach the status of a “modern library” as most of the libraries are still at the early stage (traditional or analog) of library evolution. The discussion in connection to what is needed for libraries to move from traditional to digital modern library through digitization and networking is presented in Chapter eight in relation to managing resources at distance. The lack of attainment of modern libraries is seen by participants to be a challenge to the achievement of resource sharing and the library’s mission.
In the organizational chart (see figure 9, Chapter 7), several units can be positioned close to each other. However, due to lack of what in sociocultural theory would be referred to as mediational means (e.g. Wertsch, 1998), the geographical distance becomes of a fundamental importance for the actual doings within the organization. In this particular case, concerning the geographical distance, a functional and reliable IT infrastructure, for example, constitutes a fundamental resource, which is needed for overbridging distances between locations and enabling collaboration between scattered libraries. From an analytical perspective, the IT infrastructure in this example can be seen as a mediational mean that enables a work mode that otherwise, without the IT infrastructure, would not have been possible. Previously, before the merger, the libraries were located within the premises of the institution. However, in the merger, libraries are seen as connected with each other, constituting a unit of shared resources, although still geographically dispersed in different places where the university has colleges/campuses. The problem of geographical dispersion is compounded further as most colleges have branch libraries scattered across the country too. Consequently, some campuses accommodate libraries of different colleges and schools. Most of these branch libraries were departmental and faculty libraries in the former institutions before the merger but with the merger they are part of a college, which may be organizationally situated in several campuses. Furthermore, some of these libraries are serving one or more schools accommodated in the campus to which they belong. Six directors are based at College headquarters among which four out of six are located in the capital city, Kigali. This means that they also supervise campus libraries positioned at different geographical locations. Given the geographical distance between library managers and the branch libraries, there is a need for local solutions for informal leadership. Therefore, at some of the libraries one staff might be taking responsibilities for the library without being appointed as responsible.

Some effort has been made within the process of the merger to create an organizational structure that holds the libraries together. Specifically, libraries are aligned under the responsibilities of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs and Research (DVCAAR). In addition, a university librarian coordinates all libraries but none of the directors nor library staff report officially to the...
university librarian’s office. Instead, the library directors report to the Principals of colleges who are the line managers. This means that there is a disconnection between the function of the university librarian and libraries. What emerges in the context of the merger is therefore a new complex library system built upon a centralized logic involving workplaces historically situated as services to local academic disciplines offered at their campuses. The issues related to this centralization and the impact on libraries are elaborated further on in Chapter 7.

The participants’ statements allude to discrepancies between various aspects in the merger process. From the analysis of the empirical data, such discrepancies appear mainly between the visions or rhetoric about libraries and the practices going on at the respective libraries. They constitute challenges to harmonization and modernization of library work and resource sharing. Through the analysis of the empirical data, the theoretical notion the disconnect problem was coined to refer to such discrepancies observed in the data. The disconnect problem is crucial and manifests differently throughout the result chapters.

There are tensions between library staff and management regarding the alignment of library staff as administrative staff instead of academic or even academic support. There are further complications regarding attribution, management and classification of library staff. The ways of attributing titles (labels) to library staff is rather seen by library staff to be informal and inconsistent. Each person working in the library is merely labeled “librarian” or “assistant librarian” regardless of academic qualification or professional expertise. All library staff – both trained librarians and non-trained – regardless of qualification fall under one and the same category. Consequently, trained librarians strive for recognition of librarianship as a profession with international labels. That discussion is presented in Chapter 6 and 9 respectively in connection to the understanding of and possible solutions to problems linked to professional identity.
6 Understandings of the merger and resource sharing

6.1 Introduction

From the sociocultural perspective established for this study, library mergers and resource sharing must be studied in the context of different libraries with separate traditions of doing things being put together. The current chapter focuses on different views and understandings of the merger as a context of all that is happening at the separate libraries in terms of library management and use of resources. From the analysis of the empirical data emerged two perspectives on the merger. The first perspective presents the merger as a source of opportunities for the university, the country as well as for the libraries. In this perspective, mainly the senior management sees the merger as a strategy to empower the university and its libraries. Such a strategy consists of pulling resources together for reorganization and control before sharing them. I have termed this perspective an optimistic view to resource sharing, whereby resources are seen to be in abundance when they are pulled together under one unit of control. This optimistic view corresponds to resource sharing as abundancy. The second viewpoint presents the merger as a difficult process and a context full of challenges to libraries and resource sharing. This later perspective corresponds to a pessimistic view to resource sharing. Such a perspective reflects how things are being done in practice at libraries. It therefore reflects the scarcity of resources when seen from various sites where resource sharing is supposed to take place.

There are substantial discrepancies between the two perspectives, not least optimism versus pessimism among the groups of participants. The explanation to this is that such discrepancies partly reflect different positions (of the participants) in the hierarchy and partly that the managerial interview data was produced quite early in the process (June-August 2015). The data emanating from the interviews with librarians was collected later in the process of the merger (June-October 2016) and at that time staff had already been cut down and some sense of disappointment had crept in. Therefore, it is not necessarily so that the two views exclusively reflect the differences between the two
groups of participants. Rather, the understandings of the merger, library work and resource sharing vary among participants depending on where they are situated in relation to the libraries. Moreover, the managers’ rhetoric about harmonization and modernization of the library as being “a heart” appear (in the interviews) to be disconnected from the practices experienced by the library staff at different libraries.

Considering the situatedness of library work and resource sharing at different libraries and the rhetoric about resource sharing and harmonized library services prevailing in the UR management, there is a disconnect problem between visions and practices. This disconnect problem manifests in various ways as discussed in the subsequent sections. From the optimistic view to the merger and resource sharing springs the understanding of resource sharing as a strategy. This implies that the management see abundant resources that can be reorganized and shared between libraries to attain excellence. This is referred to as resource sharing of abundancy. In contrast, the pessimistic view is related to resource sharing as something that happens in practice, in and between libraries. According to the empirical data, this resource sharing materializes in the scarcity of resources. It is therefore referred to as resource sharing of scarcity.

Optimism and pessimism should also be understood in the context of two separate but intertwined (idealized) processes. The first of these is modernization, libraries adjusting to the changes of digitalization that has profoundly transformed university libraries all over the world. The overarching concern is to complement physical repositories with online digital catalogs. For several libraries at UR this concern comprises extensive challenges as not even Internet connectivity or a digital LMS is available. The second process is harmonization, libraries adjusting to the imperatives of the merger.

In the first section of this chapter, the focus is on opportunities for resource sharing appearing as a result of the merger. The participants perceived the merger as presenting opportunities both within and from outside of the university. For the university, the merger is a strategy for reorganization and control of resources. The focus is on how different ways of dealing with resources constitute a source of enhanced achievements to the university and related benefits to both the
university as organization and individual members. From outside the university, the merger is seen as an opportunity to position the university as a competent international actor.

In the second section, where the pessimistic view is in focus, the attention is turned to challenges, which are discussed in connection to the merger as a process and a strategy. The main result here is that the merger is seen as a problematic process that is characterized by the disconnect problem materialized through various aspects of management as regards to library organization, reorganization of resources and understandings of library and librarianship as a profession.

The empirical data was produced in collaboration with participants during interviews and through observations at their workplaces. Participants include senior managers (SM), library managers (LM), and library staff (LS) from different campuses/colleges.

6.2 Optimistic view of the merger and resource sharing

Participants from both groups initially regarded the merger with a rosy-eyed view and with high expectations. Essentially, it was expected that harmonization of resources would also lead to modernization. In the following, statements and observations in the data that reflect opportunities are presented and discussed in two main clusters. The first one deals with aspects related to empowerment of the university through pulling resources together for control, reorganization and sharing. Here the benefits of unifying resources are discussed as regards to sharing those resources and collaboration between libraries. The second cluster deals with modernization and harmonization of libraries. This cluster includes discussions on aspects related to libraries and librarians with a key emphasis on quality services and development of both resources and competences of library staff.

6.2.1 Empowerment through unifying resources

From the analysis of the empirical data, it appeared that the senior managers have early on considered the merger as a way of becoming excellent through the unification of all resources under one unit for management and control. The merger is seen as an efficient strategy to
manage and harmonize all kinds of resources at the university level instead of scattered colleges and/or campuses. As can be seen in the subsequent quotation, the merger is perceived as a way to empowering the university both in Rwanda and internationally.

*One thing about the merger which I think is good is that ... for example before the merger... you were A, B, C... and there were different libraries where some were very small, the services were not good but because of the merger we are going to have one unified university and one library (senior manager).*

In this statement, the senior manager expresses the benefit and advantages of becoming gathered under one university management. The benefit envisioned here is about the unification and harmonization of resources that is supposed to lead to improvement of services. The changes in management are seen to be shaping other activities conducted not only at the library level but also at the university at large. Through the merger, the university management expects to achieve much more even though resources are not supposed to increase. This connects to the notion of economies of scale. However, in practice, this notion may not work as the entities that are to be harmonized are so fundamentally different. Some study participants’ expectations are high and immediate whereas others, among them managers, may instead see problems in the way that the merger is expected to easy harmonization of institutions that are very different in character.

*When you talk of a university, it is a university and not a technical or professional institute of the kind we used to have! There should be a difference!* (SM).

This statement implies that the senior manager fears that the former institution is not being transformed according to the requirements and standards of an internationally established university. The former technical institute referred to by the manager used to offer a two-year or two and half-year training program post-secondary school as illustrated in the presentation of the education system in Chapter 2 (L2 or L3 in figure 2). The senior manager expects major changes in order to become a degree awarding university. The changes might refer to upgrading teaching programs up to bachelors’, masters’ and Ph.D. degrees. Such changes necessitate acquisition of various materials
including equipment such as ICTs and media to enhance library collections. Furthermore, staff management and working strategies tailored to the expectations of a university are required. In these two above excerpts, there is an emphasis on the benefit of belonging to one larger institution. In this case, the participants consider the university as one consolidated unit that brings changes and great expectations.

Harmonization usually involves settling of numerous issues of power. The question of which of the many local standards that should apply for the libraries needs to be addressed. In a situation like this, there are opportunities for the largest libraries to take the lead on enhancing collaboration, but according to the participants, the merger prospects include possibilities of collaboration, strength and growth within the university that can nurture internal capacity building. However, collaboration can be designed to occur in manifold ways.

*I regard the merger as an opportunity for staff to collaborate and exchange ideas, skills, and knowledge. Every institution was doing things on its own, now I think there will be a harmonized framework for all libraries; we hope to collaborate with those who have many materials (LM).*

Harmonization is here talked about as an opportunity for both collaboration and benefiting from those who have many resources. This can be seen as an ambition toward growing and advancing together by more efficiently using existing resources or scaling up resources for libraries. However, such spirit of common understanding and progress seems not to be widely established yet.

*The most important thing is to work together, [I mean] directors and line/top managers to have a common understanding in working and developing our libraries and harmonization of our system, resources and share what we have (LM).*

Contrary to the previous statement, which emphasizes collaboration among library staff, it is here a matter of leadership collaboration. The library director’s emphasis is on the perceived synergy involved and benefit in working and developing projects with a unified vision. Having a common understanding and the same goals appears, according to this participant, to be key to a constructive work towards a
development that is sustainable in libraries. However, it should be noted that any merger involves bringing together actors who were used to working with diverse interests and visions. Implicit tensions tend to become manifest if the merger involves ideals of cost efficiency, which is the case here. Within such a scenario, different actors are prone to position themselves as stakeholders rather than as actors striving for unified visions.

Nevertheless, there are participants who see the merger as an opportunity for the merged institutions and their staff members to grow and become stronger by being part of a larger institution. Several participants appear to see the merger as a way to increase both quality and quantity of resources.

*My guess is that other colleges, campuses, have subscribed to good quality journals and publishers; so I really want that to be extended to this campus; I want to be able to access the library... in any campus of the University of Rwanda. For me now we belong to a big institution with a lot of... a pull of competences and experiences, I see that as an opportunity, it is a chance for us. The way we have been doing many things alone in the countryside ...the location and experience..., but now, we have many people to learn from (SM).*

The account shows the will and pride to rise from a small institution and benefit from being part of a larger one. Being part of the University of Rwanda brings an opportunity to get access to more information resources than before. Furthermore, it is an opportunity not only to learn from other members of the institution and exchange knowledge and skills, but also to collaborate and thereby develop together.

### 6.2.2 Empowerment through sharing resources

The merger was charged with great expectations connected to harmonization of all resources from different merged institutions. Unifying resources under one unit appears to be a strategy that builds on the notion of abundancy of resources that can be reorganized and shared under supervision of one centralized unit. This is a benevolent view of resource sharing, where the participants from both groups see no problems of sharing all kinds of resources within and outside the University of Rwanda. According to the participants, libraries are
central to the teaching and learning activities and interconnected with other units of UR. They consider that resources in libraries cannot be isolated from overall resources of the university. Consequently, the participants talked about opportunities of sharing resources between libraries in the new context of merged systems and between individual staff.

I think resource sharing is to have an unlimited access to resources from far so people can just use the resources as they want as well as they are available, so and not saying that resources are used by the owner or someone who is managing them but resources be used by someone who needs them (SM).

From this excerpt, there is a sense of the process of harmonization also as a way of shaping the library profession within UR. From this vantage point, existing problems are a matter of poorly managed resources and less with librarians actually supplying services to users. There is a hope that the harmonization will generate more users as well as facilities and that therefore common resources will be more used.

The merger is a good opportunity to share all types of resources, physical resources, instruments, laboratories, library materials, human resources and I think we are opening our mind also and it is an opportunity to change our mindset as well (SM).

This statement, again, signals that there is a shift implied regarding the ways in which this participant views the work tasks, less concerned with collections and more with servicing users. At the same time, resources is not only a matter of various types of scholarly materials.

You know, sharing resources will be sharing everything, human resources, information, facilities, skills and experience (SM).

According to this senior manager, the resources should be seen to be crosscutting and sometimes interdependent as long as they are used within the university. The empirical data evokes the idea that the sharing of resources might serve as a way to make people get together and work as a team following the same goals.

As with the merger, participants also considered resource sharing as opening up to internal strength and growth. It thereby served as an
expression of rational use of internal resources, given the strong ambitions toward internationalization, national cooperation and sharing.

Our university is going on board with several plans of introducing – you know e-learning platforms, provide a number of materials to the students to enhance their quality of learning, but unfortunately, the given level of quality of internet access is... we still have some challenges... (SM).

This excerpt reveals a disconnection between the highflying visions of the University leadership and the restrictions of existing resources. These participants considered resource sharing at UR as a booster for resource sharing at the national level because it might help to involve other partners from academic and/or outside the academy as well. This was seen as bringing collaboration with public and private institutions.

Resource sharing is one area in which we can use technology to increase the number of students, connecting the different campuses and then we can... let say... enlarging our collaboration and sharing our resources not only here in Rwanda but also outside the country. If we can develop a kind of knowledge network in the whole country and not only in terms of educational and higher learning institutions but also with regards to other research organizations [...] and in the long run connect to international organizations and universities (SM).

Resource sharing is here seen as a powerful tool for enhancing cross-border collaboration. It is referred to as an area, which can generate numerous advantages of facilitating educational and research services at the university. However, one of the essential aspects of sharing across geographically distributed libraries concerned the transportation of non-digitized media for interlibrary loans.

If it is one library, it does not matter where the book is, what matters is the delivery to me at my workplace. Let say this will be done within 24 hours. This means that we need a mechanism of transporting it. The good thing about Rwanda, is that it is a small country, I mean, small in size; so it is possible to move, it is possible that within 24 hours a book will be delivered. For online materials, it is necessary that people can electronically access
most of whatever they want on screen in their office or wherever they are and use it online (SM).

In this quote, the senior manager relates the line of reasoning around the transportation of books to a service perspective. The emphasis is on the quality of service the library ought to deliver to its users, first for printed materials through interlibrary loan and second for digital resources. This may also signal an established convention of giving priority to print material, seeing the physical book as more essential than online resources. Nevertheless, the statement can also be seen as articulating a shift from analog to digital format of information materials as well as from product to service. In connection to the service delivery, participants insist on the availability and use of both printed and digital materials as expressed in the following excerpt. To some, this may be a matter of preference, for others the primacy of physical books reflect the lack of broadly implemented digitization.

*I think relying on printed books only does not really help in the twenty-first century ...but for us we do not have internet connection here...so, it is really hard to achieve resource sharing...*(SM).

This statement implies that resource sharing of scholarly material across geographical distances is unproblematic as long as all parties have acceptable Internet access. The assumption in the quotation seems to be that it is questionable that it is possible to even start sharing advanced scholarly resources without stable connection to Internet. However, there is always the possibility of transporting books by car, but that does not solve access to constantly updated online journals, the core resource for internationally recognized scholars within most disciplines.

According to the participants, resource sharing is an important practice, but in most cases the working conditions and standards in campuses were uneven and hindering this practice. As in the last excerpt, the lack of Internet connection is seen to hamper resource sharing even if the involved parts are willing to share. The lack of Internet connectivity is hence seen as a fundamental problem for sharing common resources. However, lack of Internet connectivity is only part of the problem. It is also a matter of insufficient engagement with the full process of modernization, i.e. access to state-of-the-art international research.
Thus, without an infrastructure that includes Internet connectivity, researchers cannot take part of contemporary discussions in their field. This is a major problem for researchers, as they are not given the opportunity to access quality material. This is elaborated further on as a challenge in Chapter 8 and in the conclusions in Chapter 11.

In addition to sharing information materials, participants from senior management considered librarians’ skills and competences as major resources that can be used efficiently. They emphasized the involvement of the library staff and the importance of their skills and knowledge in teaching and research activities.

Within our research strategies as part of [name of administrative unit], we have made it clear that we would like librarians to be involved in the teaching, for example, in research methodology courses at undergraduate, at masters’ level. Even when teaching about literature survey... as we do not want the theoretical only, we want practically the librarians to be involved in that (SM).

It seems clear that this senior manager expects the librarians to contribute to knowledge production and dissemination. However, this might require librarians to have other sets of skills than what they have at present. In this sense, the above statement does also express the need for capacity building in order to help librarians to upgrade their competences so that they can be able to support researchers. The empirical data do also include passages that emphasize the need for modernization of physical space in the libraries as well as IT equipment as a way towards efficient use of resources.

I would like to see a library with a large open social space... as a knowledge center so people can go, discuss, talk, and search together. I think of creating reading rooms like a big hall which is called a reading room... what we need is a big area, a big space with IT access computers and laptops, subject librarians at hand that can talk to people and help people, that is what I see (SM).

This statement signals a shift regarding the purpose of library spaces. Now, with the merger, it is not only a question of having the library as a place for lending books to visitors who come to collect them; it is also a case of having the library as a space where people meet and work. In
In this sense, the library is seen as a place that facilitates interactions among library materials and various users such as students and researchers. This repurposing of the library involves revisions and modernization of the library architecture in ways that support researchers and users, e.g. more rooms for group discussions and facilities such as printing and copying machines.

In addition to the perspectives on empowerment through harmonization and modernization, many participants also viewed the merger as a way to grow together and open up for external networking. In this regard, they discussed opportunities of collaboration with external partners, as presented in the next section.

6.2.3 Empowerment through collaboration with external partners

Besides providing internal opportunities, the merger was seen as an opportunity that enables a larger network as well as a more intense and diverse collaboration with external partners. In this regard, funds from outside collaborators can be used to develop the whole university rather than just individual institutions or colleges as it used to be before the merger. Participants emphasized the benefit from the collaboration with the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). With the partnership that concerned one institution before and extended to UR after the merger, there is an emphasis from the managerial perspectives on the role of UR in Rwanda and at international level.

The merger is an opportunity for us to grow, to open our mind and be part of a bigger institution. For instance, the UR-Sweden program is an opportunity for capacity building; we are aware of all the possible opportunities it opens up to (LM).

By now, we are open; we have many ...if I can say partners, collaborators, which is good! A good example, I know that you are doing your Ph.D. in Sweden [and that] this is part of the
In this excerpt, the manager recognizes the important role of the SIDA program in building the capacity of the library staff. S/he emphasizes the idea that such cooperation can lead to enhanced international recognition of a participating university. In general, the merger was seen as having opened up for an opportunity of visibility for the university as a whole.

In Rwanda, from the University of Rwanda we can develop a knowledge network of scholars to facilitate the sharing of knowledge among them. With a high speed Internet connectivity and [...] then it will not take much time to connect it, let’s say, to the other East African Communities because they might have at that time developed the similar type of network just to connect at one place and it will be ok (SM).

In this excerpt, the manager asserts that libraries have the potential to help the university to develop and position itself within a regional and international context. The participant implies that sharing knowledge at UR can be a strategy of strengthening internal capability to further embracing regional and international activities. This connects to other expectations that participants ascribe to libraries rather than of being a store of books and avail information to users. These expectations are
connected to modernization and harmonization, which are emphasized in the next section as ways towards internationalization.

6.2.4 The merger as a driver of harmonization and modernization

As stated from the outset in this chapter, harmonization and modernization appear as two interrelated concepts in the transformation process of UR libraries. Modernization (according to the needs of the digital transformation) and harmonization (according to the needs of the merger) can be seen as two processes that are difficult to sequence in order; which comes first? However, undertaken simultaneously, they form a combination akin to an ideal UR library, as expressed in visionary statements. Both harmonization and modernization are difficult because they necessarily involve changes in practices at the various libraries. In this sense, they are delicate processes that need to be engaged in with respect to the situated character of library work. The ambition with these processes is that practices and services can be reproduced in the respective libraries and yield good quality of services to researchers, students and other users from the community no matter which library they visit. In the following, there is a presentation of participant expressions concerning their perspectives related to organizational structure and reorganization of resources; the role of the library and the librarians and the potential actions in order to transform previous independent libraries into one modern library system. According to the empirical data, some of the actions include restructuration, harmonization of library services and development of resources.

*If we can have a common catalogue, it will be an advantage for all users; especially students who can access resources available in all UR campuses (LM).*

An early-recognized problem within the merger was the need to have the totality of resources within all the libraries catalogued with the same library management system (LMS). However, this turned out to be a major challenge. When talking about the libraries’ reorganization, mostly conflicting views emerged. Even though the key aspect was the managerial structure of the expected modern UR library, some of the senior managers were referring to one main and modern library with
branches at each campus. Others were considering seeing their own campus libraries strengthened. Thus, a partisan perspective (of those people who are striving for getting their own things developed) is adjacent to a modernization perspective as shown in the following quotation.

When I think of the libraries at UR, I see a structure of one university library; so, I do not see college libraries. I see a structure of one university library with different branches on the campuses. In addition, on each campus I expect that each library will provide same kind of services (SM).

This excerpt reflects the manager’s perspective of centralization vs decentralization of library management with an emphasis on a central university library. Viewed from the perspective of sociocultural theory, the need for a centralized management of resources challenges the rooted traditions within each individual library. From such a perspective, one can understand why these tensions developed. The contradicting views regarding management of libraries and resources mostly depend on the two understandings of resource sharing (as a strategy and as something in practice), which are in tensions in this thesis.

In my opinion, each library should have a certain autonomy of management and organization, of course under the control of the central library hierarchy... (LM).

Contrary to the previous statement, here, a member of library staff emphasizes a decentralized way of managing libraries and resources. S/he expresses the need for each library to have partial autonomy to decide on its activities and implement them according to its plans albeit with some kind of control from the central management but without a complete dependence on the senior management. This reflects the situatedness of library work and the importance that library staff accord to the local traditions and practices at each library.

The two statements above reflect different ways of talking about library management. The two participants consider the central library but in two different managerial ways. These two kinds of organizational structure of the library system are in conflict with each other here even
though both emphasize modernization of libraries. There are study participants who want development of libraries in general. This is expressed in the former account, where the manager underlines a centralized managerial structure with branch libraries where the university central management might decide on what to do and how to do things. In this sense, campus libraries are only waiting to implement such taken decisions, which may not be tailored to the needs and conditions of the individual branch libraries. There are also people who see one university, but want their own libraries to be developed with respect to the existing, local, library specific practices. For the latter, the partisan perspective involves the right to continue doing library work in line with how work practices have developed at their respective libraries. In addition, this perspective contains a sense of envy among the library staff, which is characterized by the overarching question why one at one’s own library should abandon the ways of doing things to embrace new ones.

Viewed from the perspective of sociocultural theory, a centralized decision-making style challenges the situated practices at each library. There are many tensions between participants in centralized managerial contexts and those that work at the individual, local libraries. The size of the university and understandings of how all the resources can be shared can be viewed in many different ways. Such viewpoints are scattered according to different geographical locations and the managerial hierarchies. The decisions-makers may not be well informed about the situations and practices at the libraries. As they are not often present in any of the libraries, they tend to have idealized images of what goes on in these. According to an idealized view, appearing in the empirical data, there are advantages with centralized management since the totality of the university’s resources can be overviewed, managed and strategically steered. However, there are also those who highlight the disadvantages as the variety of local practices can be misunderstood. There are furthermore fundamental difficulties of controlling and shifting local entities that have been misunderstood. In the empirical study it was frequently noted a kind of eagerness to preserve the established practices at each library whereby the library staff consider changes to disturb the usual ways of working in libraries. Thus, for them as the actual local practitioners, a decentralized system
would aid to assure the continuity of established practices or allow change that respected the local traditions of working.

While some participants viewed centralization as a way to become stronger as an institution, others viewed it as leading to a ‘manager-subordinate’ relation. The latter group asserted that the centralized system can hinder productivity. One aspect of this is that people start self-guessing their own behavior as they do not fully know the centralized leadership’s standpoint regarding certain behaviors. This can lead to inertia. Another aspect is that whenever there is a need for decision, activities slow down as the request for a decision is moved up the decision line. Decision-making takes a lot of time and different scenarios are possible, and sometimes there are delays upon delays. In some instances, there is even no decision made. Looking at the centralized viewpoint of this, decision-makers may also have difficulties making decisions as they may receive a request from a library, which needs to be analyzed with regards to the possible consequences for all the other libraries. In situations like these, they may need to consult with a variety of actors in order to feel safe that they are making a decision that may be appropriate for all sites throughout the dispersed library system. This is one of the ways in which harmonization of situated practices at various libraries becomes challenged.

In connection to views on harmonization and modernization of the library under one managerial structure, participants also expressed their views on expected quality and services in the libraries.

### 6.2.5 The merger, quality and services

Participants from both groups related the quality of services offered by libraries to their descriptions of their ideal modern library. In particular they emphasized aspects related to infrastructure, library collections and staff. They perceived a combination of these aspects as prerequisite to service delivery of high quality, which entails the assumed power and ability to provide better services than before the merger. With such expectations in mind, different actors charge libraries with different meanings as well.
To me, I would like to see a library for the twenty-first century [...] with professional librarians...subscription to quality journals, with good quality internet, with no restriction whatsoever, long service hours, without making queues to access the computers. I imagine a paperless library; I would say a digital library where students can access the services using a smart card. I want a library that is accessible to people, students, the community, staff, anyone (SM).

In this manager’s account, the emphasis is on quality of services through incorporation of ICT tools, professionalism and adequate materials. Considering library services as comprising many components, as this participant does, a lack of computers might hinder the access to digital materials. Likewise, having information materials and digital resources without professional librarians might also be insufficient in terms of quality of services rendered to the library users. Furthermore, if most participants desire digital materials, they may also, at the same time, value the role of printed materials. The presence of both types of collections in libraries requires sufficient equipment and facilities in place in order to enable access by users.

...the world is big but it becomes small when you reach a library where you can get access to any information you want: publications, books, we can use e-means whatever and you can get your information just sitting in a library or in your office. So, it is very important,... and...we need really a modern, very well equipped library to support whatever we are doing because today UR wants to be a research leading institution (SM).

In this account, the manager considers a modern and well-equipped library to be a potential facility that can lead a university to a certain level of achievement of its expectations. However, regarding the capacity of libraries, participants seemed to have diverging views in terms of available resources. While some participants affirmed to have the necessary equipment to make progress and enable resource sharing amongst libraries, others were still pessimistic and considered current progress to be far behind from the expected outcomes of the merger.

We do not have everything but most of [what] we need to function as a university library [is] there...we have staff,... we have...there is no campus without a building that we can call a
library; it might not be in the best shape but it is there so that we can start build from there. Therefore, I don’t think that we are starting from scratch, we do have things which we need to organize, from that we need to improve on, we need to reallocate or to shift people but things are there, we are not from zero (SM).

The senior manager in this quotation emphasizes the state of existing resources and invokes a need for a readjustment and reorganization of these resources. In the first part of the excerpt, the manager articulates an optimistic view about resources available in libraries. This reflects the view of resource sharing in abundance whereby the management sees enough resources, which need only to be re-organized and reallocated. However, what is expressed in the second part of the statement concern plans to upgrade these resources so to reach the standards of the modern university library. This reflects another view that relates to scarcity when it comes to quality of services and standards of a modern university and its libraries.

In contrast to such an optimistic view, others reflect gaps in terms of equipment including ICT tools, buildings and other facilities assumed to be needed for harmonization of practices in all libraries. The participants’ views differ again depending on the contexts.

I cannot say that we have a library; it is a small confined room with no librarian and those who were appointed here have refused to stay and resumed their previous campuses (SM).

This excerpt reveals a frustration of the library not being a library and this leading to a fundamental lack of durable staffing. What the senior manager says here contradicts the previous account by another senior manager who highlighted that existing resources can be reorganized. From the perspective of the former manager, this room is called a library and counted among others. For the latter manager, this is not a library because it is not working, especially not without staff. This implies that people in separate sites and contexts take different perspectives and thus have different expectations of what can be done in and through the libraries.

The merger was initiated two years ago, but I do not see any improvement from there... we are still working as before, infrastructure is still the same, no new building nor library
management software...each library works on its own. I do not see anything really; I would expect to see changes and improvement in libraries (LS).

This library staff has expected from the merger major changes in terms of library management software and infrastructure. The quotation evokes a strong sense of disappointment where what was expected from the merger is perceived as never being realized. The library staff considers different resources that are supposed to be making the library work more efficient and lead to the provision of the same services at different libraries, but concludes that there is no improvement.

In connection to the discussion around physical space and equipment at libraries, one can read from the UR facts and figures 2013-2018 Retrospective Statistical Report 1 (University of Rwanda, 2018, p. 51) that “[l]ibrary services do not need space extension but proper space relocation to improve services, this is also backed by digital library services established in UR”. This statement needs further reflection and discussion considering the accounts of participants in the empirical chapters. It is a statement that indeed reflects the view of many of the senior managers, namely that there are plenty of resources available at different libraries, which only needs to be reorganized. However, at many individual libraries things appear differently, especially since space is not transferable nor movable from one place to another, which perhaps serves to explain why many of the library staff take a different standpoint, namely that there are not enough resources no matter how they are (re)organized.

However, in another passage of the above mentioned report, the asymmetry among libraries and the uneven distribution of other crosscutting infrastructure (e.g. lecture/classrooms, seminar rooms, laboratories, and hostels room), is recognized. The account states that “[e]ven though most of items assessed under crosscutting section are available and meet required standards in general, considering item by item per Campus, there is a need of improvement at least to 70% of building to meet standards as per Presidential Order establishing quality in HLIs” (University of Rwanda, 2018, p. 53). The report is in line with one of the two main views that appear from empirical data, namely the one that claims that there is enough resources and that it is mainly a matter of reorganizing them. What is said in this report
highlights that there are different views amongst people within the UR regarding the library and resources. This is discussed further in Chapter 10.

In the subsequent section, the merger is presented as an opportunity to develop resources in order to enhance resource sharing.

### 6.2.6 Merger and development of resources for improved services

The participants often talked about the merger as a strategy for improving the quality and quantity of the resources. This involves both harmonization and modernization. Staff frequently compared the new formed university to the former institutions. The opportunities as expressed by participants cover different kinds and emphasize the growth of both individuals and the university at large. This could, for example, be in the form of harmonization by allowing for benefits of sharing resources.

> The merger is an easy way for students to access books in any campus of the UR and the librarians to circulate books. This will save time to both the users and librarians, as it will be possible also to return books to any campus. It is also a way for collaboration between librarians, and most importantly there will be teamwork and easy sharing of information among librarians (LS).

In this account, the member of the library staff highlights the benefit that groups of people and individuals from the merged institutions might take from being part of the University of Rwanda. The major advantage emphasized in the quotation concerns information access and efficient use of resources. From such a perspective, groups of people or administrative units like campus libraries benefit from different types of library collections of information available in other libraries, learn from each other about good practices and exchange of expertise. The new working context is here seen as an opportunity for library staff to upgrade and widen their skills, especially in relation to the presence of a potentially larger group of researchers and students with a range of information needs compared to before the merger. Some of the participants considered the interdisciplinarity of users at a given campus
as a booster for a library staff to open up their minds and acquire knowledge that would make them confident and supportive to users.

Now the users are no longer from a single school, department, campus or discipline...I am now required to double effort in order to respond to their various queries and this will shape my knowledge too (LM).

This library director emphasizes the benefits of being exposed to a large community of users from various research areas and disciplines. Even if the interdisciplinarity in campus also can be seen as a challenge (on the administrative side), the library manager considers the presence of different users at a campus as an informal way of shaping ones’ skills through individual search for information in databases and media in order to respond to users’ interests and queries. Such observations by participants emphasize the connections and mutual shaping between the context and individuals. Exposure to a wider range of academic disciplines and subjects is expected to result in development of new expertise. Thus, the participants viewed the merger as an opportunity to strengthen the capacity of libraries and library staff as a way to achieve quality services to users.

When asked about the capacity and ability of library staff, participants emphasized the potential of modernization for both the university and the library staff in becoming an international actor. Thus, they see the necessity of upgrading and positioning competence development of library staff within the ambition of the university to become a research leading university. In this line, the participants expressed the need for formal and regular capacity building schemes in order to help the university meet international standards.

...we need continuous trainings for library staff in order to keep updated and help users accordingly... in most libraries [including the one here at our college] we only have diploma holders while a librarian should at least be a bachelor’s degree holder (LM).

In this statement, the library manager points to the expectations regarding capacity building connected to being part of the university. This reflects a change concerning the meaning and identity of library
staff within the university. The new setting of the university, which supposes new visions, improved working conditions, facilities and quality services, brings new needs for improving competences and quality of staff who are required to reach an upgraded level to meet the expectations of the university vision. However, library staff at the libraries cannot wait for such expectations to be realized.

*If we could get regular trainings [...] to catch up and update our knowledge ...you know...information technology evolves continuously and knowledge should be updated...* (LS).

This excerpt reflects the expectations connected to modernization, whereby library staff anticipated improved quality services, which would require more skills and competences. What this line of reasoning implies is that the ambition of increased quality of services has to go hand in hand with the increase of the necessary means for achieving this goal, and vice versa. Modernization of the UR library system requires new skills and competences and the library staff have to be skilled in order to respond to the requirements of the university’s research, learning and teaching environment.

In addition to the required increase of capacity in terms of academic qualification, the increase of number of library staff as well as extension of opening hours was also deemed necessary in order to meet the needs of a growing user community.

*We need more staffing so that we can increase the opening hours... the books are not there just as flowers, just being showed on the shelves is not enough, they have to be used... and they can’t be used when the library is closed!* (SM).

The senior manager who speaks here notes the impact of the lack of enough staff on the quality of service rendered to the community. S/he emphasizes the need for more staff in order to improve services to users at this particular library. This wish to see the library being capacitated reflects the partisan perspective described earlier in this chapter. With this perspective, the library staff suggest that the management should consider the practices situated at local libraries as the basis for any plan intended to develop libraries.
6.2.7 Summary: the merger as a source of optimism

All through this section, I have brought to the fore and discussed different kinds of opportunities related to the merger. Overall, participants have adapted a favorable view of the merger, stating that it has brought together institutions previously distinct from one another. In general, participants considered the merger as providing orchestration of modernization and harmonization, making all institutions work together, becoming stronger as one unit rather than isolated parts. In this sense, the merger is seen as a process that opens up for all types of opportunities to the university and to individuals. The merger is also talked about as a strategy for improving procedures, of doing things better than before. The type of opportunities include generating internal strength through consolidation and equitable use of resources for the sake of a common achievement.

With both the advantages and disadvantages of being distanced from various local sites, managers viewed the merger as a strategy of centralizing and managing resources available at UR for a better and sustainable use of them for the benefit of all the UR members. In this way, the merger is taken to be a vehicle for becoming an efficient institution even if the total sum of resources is not increased. This view of resources goes hand in hand with the perception of resource sharing of abundancy. The merger is seen as a process and a strategy to develop and share resources within the university in order to reach quality services that comply with the expectations and growing needs of users. Through unifying and sharing resources, there appear to be expectations that the merger is a way to empower the University of Rwanda to fulfill the ideals of the vision 2020; through providing educated citizens who are able to contribute to the long-term development of Rwanda toward a knowledge-based economy. In essence, this is the hope of modernization through harmonization where becoming stronger as an institution helps also to step forward to the external or international opportunities.

In relation to external opportunities, participants considered the merger as opening up to collaboration, exposure to, and experience from the world. In this sense, the university can more successfully engage in international competition. Hence, the merger is seen as bringing great opportunities to both the university and to its staff and students. So,
there are exceedingly high expectations among all participants. These expectations are typical for the early-stage of the merger from which the empirical material was produced. The merger is used rhetorically in an optimistic sense as a catchall solution to a wide range of problems. However, the expectations from the merger were not all fulfilled. In other words, local practices at different sites are not in tandem with the expectations. Thus, in the second round of interviews, connected to library staff, a more pessimistic view was identified.

6.3 Pessimistic view of the merger and resource sharing

Contrary to the previous section, where I presented and discussed participants’ experiences and opinions related to opportunities from the merger, this section delves into views on challenges, and problems connected to the merger.

The participants appeared to use the concept of “merger” in a variety of ways and the nuanced differences were often not articulated. Roughly speaking, two distinct ways of talking about the merger were found in the empirical material: the merger as a process and the merger as a strategy. From the analysis of the empirical data, the two ways of talking about the merger are sometimes hard to distinguish. They are rather interdependent and often overlapping but they also display differences. However, they both appear to challenge practices of library management and resource sharing among geographically dispersed units.

Concerning the merger as a process, the participants noted numerous problems of harmonization. These include tensions in connection with the preparation and transitional period of the merger, issues about communication between actors, and individual attitudes toward changes. Regarding the merger as a strategy, the major issues noted are those related to a centralized decision-making mode, where the senior management appeared to overlook the problems connected to harmonization by disregarding situated, local practices at individual libraries. The grounds for considering one or another aspect as a challenge are based in knowledge about international standards and experience from other libraries worldwide. The participants talked about major challenges in connection to the merger process and to the
lack of understanding of libraries and librarians’ professional identity, but also in connection to leadership and management of resources. When the participants spoke about resources, they primarily focused on aspects related to library collections, ICTs equipment and facilities. In connection to leadership, the focus was on communication, hierarchical structures and internal relations in libraries.

I discuss these challenges through the sociocultural perspective as established in the theory chapter. This perspective stipulates that the setting, which may or may not offer mediational means for accomplishing practices, can either hinder or enable library management and resource sharing between libraries. The focus in the following subsections is on geographical distance and communication. The overarching theoretical assumption infusing the remain of this chapter is that practices of, for example, library management and resource sharing, but also decision making, must be understood as inseparable from the context in which these practices are enacted.

### 6.3.1 The merger experienced as chaotic

The merger process was described by the participants as messy and chaotic, bringing about problems in situations where opportunities were expected. This experience of a chaotic situation of the merger affected library-working conditions at the various sites throughout the library system.

As has been discussed in section 6.2, some participants expressed high expectations concerning the merger, which they saw as an opportunity to develop their work in a positive direction. According to this line of reasoning, the merger could have been a great opportunity for both users and library staff to benefit from skills and information resources available at UR i.e. achieving modernization through harmonization. However, the lack of preparedness in moving staff and assigning them to the various libraries seems to have brought messiness, being a source of dilemma and ambiguity amongst staff.

*Ah! During the merger, there come problems [...] because... When we meet, we just talk about staff transfers. How life is in this time of confusion (LS).*
According to this member of library staff, the chaotic situation was observed in terms of reorganization of libraries and staff (re)placement, which was still ongoing at the time of data production. The harmonization process appeared to the library staff and some of the other participants as endless. The integration of libraries into one unit was seen as a major challenge as regard to organizational structure and reallocation of resources, as reported in the following excerpt:

*I only discuss with my colleague here, we discuss issues related to our particular library problems. Within the merger, our library is not lined up to any other library. As we used to receive books from the main branch in [X place], currently we are likely to be autonomous and yet our campus seems not to have its own budget. We do not have anyone to who we can address our queries (LS).*

Here, the library staff stresses what I, earlier in the thesis, have referred to as the ‘disconnect problem’. This problem consists of discrepancies between visions and practices and manifests differently in different contexts, which means that it can take on a number of different expressions. In this case, as expressed in the above quotation, it appears to result from geographical and hierarchical distances between libraries and the UR library directorate and/or the university management. This is a manifestation of the disconnect problem between organizational units. The interview study revealed fundamental discrepancies between resource sharing as a strategy and as something that goes on in practice. What is communicated in the above statement is that library staff deal with problems at the library with almost no support from either the campus administration, which is restricted due to a lack of power of decision making at the college, or from the UR libraries’ directorate, which is disconnected from the individual libraries by the organizational structure. The kind of autonomy suggested by the library staff appears to be an alternative to what is perceived as a failed harmonization and coordination. In this case, each library would have its own budget and be able to handle library matters locally. In other words, it would be pursuing harmonization through decentralized procedures rather than through a centralized steering mechanism. However, what the library staff notes above is that the library is deprived of fundamental financial and administrative support. Such a
situation is similar to statements about other libraries as well, as in the following quotation.

*As I talk now, I do not know where and whom to report to, I do not have a say. To whom can I tell this? I do not know where I am, I am in confusion; I don’t know who has the responsibility to answer my questions, who should I address my confusion or my query to? So, today...I am in confusion, I am confused. I am just looking at what I have today, and waiting maybe... I do plan; I have a plan in my head, but I do not know how to put it in...into use because we are still looking upward to the university librarian who will maybe... tell us where to start, where... maybe...what to do ...(LS).*

As can be seen in this quotation, the participant is almost in a state that can be described as desperation. S/he has a plan for what to do, but because of the isolated position without a clear view of who to report to, s/he does not know how the plan can be operationalized. The process of harmonization may thus lead to library staff not understanding their role in this larger context. This library staff indeed signals problems of disintegration within the new organizational structure and in the administrative procedures. The staff expresses feelings of isolation from a line manager, who s/he does not know who it is. This is a concrete example of the disconnection between libraries and the management. The confusion linked to such distance, as expressed here, appear to present major challenges to the performance of library staff and have a negative effect on library services rather than improving them as expected from the beginning of merger.

*[As] librarians, we are the ones who are mostly affected by the restructuration of UR and libraries. According to me, they would have considered campuses. For instance, my library has another branch at [name of campus] but I do not know anything about that library, but again we are told to be lined under a library director at college level (campus), but again we are said that the director does not handle our issues and we do not report to him/her. We are a bit confused. For me, I would wish that they made sure that each campus has a library, a director or someone who manages and handles daily issues and library staff capable to responding to the needs of different users, for example,
undergraduates, graduates and researchers. That would help to follow up daily life of libraries (LS).

Here is yet another example of the disconnect problem. In this example there is a distinct difference between what the staff has been told, namely that they are supposed “to be lined under a library director at college level”, and what is the actual case; “someone who manages and handles daily issues” is clearly missing. There is hence a disconnection between rhetoric and practices, in this particular case concerning management of libraries. Given such disconnect, the process of harmonization has been disjointed, and not according to the expected ideals.

In the three accounts above, library staff point at a situation of uncertainty in the newly formed University. It is highlighted that the university’s lack of success in creating harmonization causes frustration, uncertainty and even desperation. The library staff found that the organizational structure was still inflexible with a centralized mode of managing everything at the headquarters instead of management being decentralized and empowering colleges and campus libraries. In the light of the situated library practices, where decisions often need to be taken in line with local circumstances, harmonization through centralization of power and decision-making does not seem to be a successful option.

As an alternative, the library staff suggested that a well-thought and timely implemented harmonization process building on an understanding of how very different the libraries actually are would have made the merger more successful. However, from analyzing the empirical data, it is evident that the merger served to disrupt existing institutional arrangements with a strong top-down approach to harmonization, with no inclusion of library staff in the decision making process. The library staff expressed that the university management handled the merger with various and scattered ideas instead of focusing on the initial aim of the merger.

... if the administration would focus on the reason why we merged, the different institutions to be one, the advantages would have been there, but I can say that today the UR libraries have no structure at all, there is disorganization (LS).
The assertion in the statement is that the merger disrupted the previous institutional arrangements, but with no replacement. According to this viewpoint, there is a need to establish a functional organizational structure for libraries to work together. Because of the lack of such an organizational structure, the library staff were still waiting for the expected changes to materialize.

For the moment, I do not really see a major change but of course there is no longer that idea of ... I belong to this or that college or whatever, we are all UR staff. If the management decides to move a person from one place to another, the person no longer complains. Exchange of information and information materials within and between libraries. So far, it is all about that, nothing extra, maybe it will come in the future (LS).

This library staff recognizes slow changes compared to the expectations. S/he also notes the lack of inclusion in decision-making process. As it appears here, it can be difficult for library staff to follow a process in which they do not feel fully involved even though they are part of it. What is articulated in the statement above can be linked to the expectations of upgrading the infrastructure to fulfill the requirements of a university as one of the senior managers expressed earlier in this chapter. The emphasis is on an immediate and efficient attainment of expectations. This reflects, once again, the problem of a disconnection between visions and practices at libraries in terms of the funding put into developing libraries.

Following the former two excerpts, the library staff expressed skepticism towards the aim of the merger. Even if the library staff recognized the belongingness to a larger institution, what they expected had not yet been realized at the time of this study. Instead, the fear of being moved from one place to another was notable, finding such expectations to be stressful. This issue referred to as the ‘staff mobility’ will be explored further in a subsequent section. So, while librarians expect modernization and harmonization, accounts from the interviews express perceptions of chaos and disorganization resulting from the merger process. Nonetheless, resource sharing is seen as a positive practice in those cases where it happens. Accordingly, most of the participants emphasized preparedness and willingness to share as requisites for a successful resource sharing.
If we want to succeed resource sharing, we have to set up all requirement including materials, equipment and staff (LS).

This library staff articulates the need for appropriate infrastructure and human resources in order to facilitate resource sharing, which can be understood as if the participant expected the merger to harmonize and improve resources and services. The participants, who are accustomed to their different organizational cultures in their former institutions, considered harmonization of services and materials as a way towards successful resource sharing. However, as time went on, things appeared not to happen as expected. In most cases, rather than increasing the number of staff, the library staff saw that the merger was taken by University leadership as an opportunity to dramatically reduce library staff. Hence, from their vantage point and as a result of the merger it stood clear that they had less colleagues.

In this merger, the number of staff has been reduced [drastically] and many services are not operational due to lack of staff, this is always in my mind. In some libraries only one staff works there (LM).

This library manager highlights that the reorganization process subsequent to the merger has shrunk the number of staff since many employees have been dismissed. Such downsizing might seem rational from the perspective of resource sharing of abundance, according to which fewer staff can do more. However, as shown by participants’ accounts, the “doing more with less” is not a successful strategy because libraries need staff to function and support their users. Reorganization while modernizing and at the same time harmonizing into one effective library unit requires, according to the library staff, added man-hours, not less. The downsizing affected not only those who lost their jobs, but also the remaining work force; there are cases where one librarian maintains a library alone. In other cases, most libraries have one staff on duty while before the merger they used to work at least in pair.

Working alone in this library makes me feel the burden of the reorganization process and the gap left behind by staff that were kicked out. I deal with all the services in this library and you can imagine when I get sick, it is closed! [...] and ...go to the toil[...]
Here the library staff reports the impact of downsizing, which has resulted in critical working conditions for the librarian and restricted services to the community using that particular library. The library becomes very vulnerable since its function depends on one staff only. It is evident that the cut of staff is problematic in terms that might be difficult to grasp from the vantage point of a centralized and distant position.

In connection to the reorganization of resources, the merger is thus seen to have disturbed library staff and their work practices, not least through relocation of human resources. This mobility was reported to be a major challenge to individuals and services at large.

### 6.3.2 Staff mobility or staff stability

Even if the merger initially was seen as a promising process and a strategy intending to empower the university through harmonization of resources, it was also seen by the participants as problematic and chaotic as regards to rearrangement and management of resources. One fundamental aspect of this is that the process of harmonization involved distinct strategies of moving staff in various ways. Decisions to relocate staff did not come about through a dialogue process with staff. Rather, it appears as if such decisions were made through a centralized agenda. In essence, moving books and people were seen as similar activities.

Library staff viewed the staff mobility as disturbing previously established practices and working conditions. The following excerpt, for example, consists of a participant’s complaint about unconsented transfer to a new workplace.

> Staff placement and management restructuring are the most important things that remind me of the merger. It puzzled me because I have never applied nor wished to work here... I do not really feel comfortable in this campus, [...] I am separated from my family, my children... I feel like I will not be able to perform as before (LS).
In this statement, the library staff expresses a sense of oppression on him/her. As human resources formally are seen to be part of one organization, the geographical distribution of staff appears to be less important for this kind of resource sharing. This indicates that what is seen as an opportunity for some people might be a challenge to others. From the above passage, it is clear that staff mobility is a challenge while previously presented as an opportunity. For instance, while some people see the merger as a way of getting to know each other and to enable easy mobility of human resources, others appear to want to stay in their ‘comfort zone’ as expressed in the following quote.

...if for example we feel that we need more capacity in [Z] campus, it should be possible to transfer staff from [Y] campus to [Z] campus still in the library. They should be able to function normally [and] they [should] not feel like ‘I am disadvantaged by being going to [Z] or I am going to provide lesser service on that side’ (SM).

As can be seen in this quotation, the management may decide to move someone at any time against his or her will. The manager complains that staff are whining about being moved about and asserts that they should not complain about it. In other words, the senior manager articulates a resistance to the procedure of moving people from one campus to another. The problem that the senior manager identifies of employees not wanting to be moved around between libraries might be linked to the way the decision to move a person has (or has not) been communicated or initiated rather than to the needs of staff to stay in a comfort zone or to some sort of resistance to change. In this case, communication patterns are key features that support or hamper the implementation of decisions. It stands clear from the two quotations presented thus far in this section that according to the view of these participants, staff mobilization is crucial to the merger and needs to be accomplished regardless of the consequences for the relocated staff.

In contrast to the view expressed in the above accounts, which emphasizes staff mobility, others advocate for staff stability as a way to overcome inherent difficulties.

*It think of staff stability... you know, keep moving staff, and students.... To me I would consider that I make sure that staff are*
not moving too much, students the same, I would consider that programs, colleges or schools are allocated according to the community needs (SM).

This excerpt reflects the worries linked to continuous staff mobility, also involving students in different campuses. It can furthermore be noted that the argument, presented in the quotation, against moving people around is grounded in the assertion that colleges and their activities must be aligned with the communities that they are supposed to serve.

[The university has fourteen campuses...and you know... each campus has its own advantages and disadvantages by location and so on, so students are having issues and difficulties in accessing resources (SM).

In this quotation, staff mobility is related to complicated administration of staff and students scattered across different campuses. Since the campuses do not have the same facilities and practices, the staff have varying working experiences. It might take time for an incoming staff to settle in and be productive. It may take time to become familiar with the working traditions that are rooted in that particular local setting. Such problems are to be expected as different functions relating to the same unit may be geographically dispersed and fall apart when such practical circumstances are not considered. In such circumstances, situated practices in a particular library become disturbed or even discontinued. When staff familiar with the users/community are gone, the community suffers.

To sum up, in this section the participants considered the transitional period to be short and library staff were not involved in that process. For some participants, there was no transitional period, nor any communication strategies for people to prepare for changes. In most of the cases noted in this study, decisions about staff mobility were taken against the will of the concerned persons and without prior consultations with respective units. It appeared that the management had overlooked the role of communication in staff placement and the consequences of the staff mobility to the university and the individuals as regards to the situated practices at the respective libraries. This led
some participants to question their identity as librarians and librarianship in general.

6.3.3 Contradicting viewpoints of library, librarianship and professional identity

In this section, the focus is on aspects related to the struggle of library staff to be recognized as professionals and as useful for the university. The librarians studied appeared to struggle to be treated as equal to other staff at other units instead of being neglected, as reported in the participants’ accounts. The decision to staff many of the libraries with a large group of non-professionals (a third of the library staff as indicated in table 5, Chapter 7), was seen by those participants who are trained library professionals as a problem related to an ill-prepared recruitment strategy and to the attitude of senior management towards libraries and librarians. The concepts of “non-professional” and “professional” can be linked to two conflicting approaches that are recurrent in the empirical data and that relate to the overarching question of what constitutes a library and library activities.

As long as decision-makers think that, anyone – even an illiterate person can be a librarian or at least work in a library – I cannot do anything. For time being there is nothing I can do before rising awareness about library and convince them to change their mind set about libraries (LS).

With this statement, the library staff highlights the negative effects of the senior management’s insufficient understanding of librarians and the work they do. By not acknowledging librarians’ expertise, the performance of librarians become undervalued. The library staff highlights a disappointment due to the disparity between the expectations and what they experience regarding how things are done at their respective libraries; as in this case, staffed by people that are not trained for the kind of work they are expected to do. Moreover, concerning the management’s approach to libraries and librarianship, several participants emphasized the problematic decision making process. This leads to an interpretation by library staff that the management appears to undervalue the role of a library and librarians in the university even though the visionary documents state otherwise. This is again a manifestation of the disconnect problem between
visionary documents and practices, which manifests itself in the form of decisions that hamper rather than develop individual libraries as part of the University.

_No more funds put into library development. In most cases, the management considers the portion of fund from partners, which is not sufficient [because it does not cover all aspects and sectors of library services and development. This is the reason why at this library we depend mostly on book donations (LS)._"

In this statement, the library staff talks about the concern of downsizing of funds for libraries and the possible impact this can have on library services to the community. S/he signals a tendency to limit budget for libraries or not invest in it at all. The evidence from the documents also supports the participants’ observations. For instance, while reviewing the yearly budgets for books (including e-books) in college libraries, I found that the budget decreased between 2015-2016 and 2018-2019. In one of the colleges, the decrease was respectively from 50 million Rwandan francs, equivalent to 66,700 USD in 2015-2016 to 50,400 USD in 2018-20196. In another college, the budget was reduced from 70,000 to 49,500 USD. This budget cut respectively of 24% and of 29% can have a significant impact on library services, especially since these particular colleges like many others have libraries and users in more than one campus and eventually the number of users has increased. The issue of funds does affect not only collection development, but also the number and quality of staff recruited for libraries.

_Another problem is related to staff, we are only [x number] staff, which means that [y number] staff are working daytime and [z number o] for evening time. Sometimes the number of users exceeds the capacity of staff since we also work during weekends (LS)._"

This participant highlights the discrepancy between the expected services and the available human resources, which challenges the work at the library and imposes stressful working conditions to library staff. This denotes a disconnect problem between the rhetoric about abundant

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6 The exchange rate was 1USD= 749.62 RWF when the conversion was done in September 2018.
resources and the actual situation at particular libraries where the scarcity of staff undermines potential services offered to users.

At our library, the situation is worse because [a big number of] staff is under temporary contracts employment, i.e. they cannot well perform their duties because they feel unstable and they may quit or be fired at any time. Again, we are not all trained in librarianship; none of us is qualified in library science. Therefore, it is exhausting because we struggle and make much effort in order to meet the needs of users; we really need training to overcome such problems (LS).

From this statement, it is clear that the library staff is distressed to be working under a professional jurisdiction that is far different from his or her qualification. The participant highlights both a misplacement and mistreatment with reference to employment conditions. These working conditions appear to be not specific to libraries after the merger – but rather a heritage from the former institutions.

Two kinds of staff mobility was identified in the study. The first consisted of competent library staff being relocated. The second kind involved moving staff without library education from other parts of UR to libraries. This kind of staff mobility appeared to disregard issues of librarianship being a profession and requirement of appropriate formal schooling. Several participants expressed their disappointment about the way a library appears to be considered by the senior management as a dumping ground of poorly performing staff from other units and services.

You find someone is ... they used to call us “library officers”, others named library assistant [...] , at least for them that is one of the qualifications that are known worldwide. If you are called assistant librarian it is well-known but...again library used to be the cave, the dumping – let me use this bitter word – of people who have failed to perform in any department they would send them to library, which undermines the functions and achievement of the library (LS).

In the above excerpt, the member of library staff expresses a dissatisfaction with recruitment and job classification according to which everyone can fit in a library. The statement can be seen as part
of negotiations and a struggle for a professional identity. The insufficient recruitment strategy for libraries can also be related to job classification. Library staff aspired to negotiate the labeling and job classification of the people employed in the libraries. According to the participants, securing a labeling according to international standards could be a solution to the issue of “dump libraries”.

6.4 Chapter summary

Participants’ views and understandings about resource sharing and library management vary depending on where the person is located in the UR organizational structure, in relation to libraries, and to the geographical location. It was noted by many library staff that central management took fundamental decisions regarding harmonization and modernization, seemingly without hands on knowledge about the specific services at the various libraries. The process of harmonization is difficult given the uneven distribution of infrastructure and competences in the libraries. In addition, different libraries had developed traditions of attending to quite separate needs with unique forms of services not easily harmonized.

It has been noted in this chapter that harmonization and modernization needed to be dealt with simultaneously. However, as long as the centralized decision-making process was less informed about the local practices at the various libraries, it appeared difficult to make headway. The people who work in libraries and that have a developed understanding of practices, challenges, and problems throughout the library system would have much to contribute to the processes of harmonization and modernization, but appeared not to be consulted concerning a variety of major issues. The analysis of the participants’ statements yielded two viewpoints about the merger, i.e., one optimistic and one pessimistic viewpoint.

From the optimistic viewpoint, the participants see the merger as an opportunity for reorganization of resources and resource sharing between libraries with two major conditions, clearly voiced at the outset of the merger process. The first condition consists of preparedness, which implies that the management considers the differences between libraries and particular conditions of each library, i.e. the situatedness
of library work and the locally shaped practices at each site. The second condition implies the involvement of the library unit in the decision-making process. As the ones who master the practices in libraries and library work, the involvement of library representatives in decision-making could contribute to well-informed decisions regarding libraries. According to the participants, the merger initiators should have considered the uniqueness and complexity of the library system and its problems beforehand. As it appeared in the interviews with the participants and from the analysis of the report by the expert consultant (Davenport, 2011), the library representatives were not involved in any preparatory meetings, nor consulted during the process. Hence, expertise developed in library practice was not taken into consideration.

From the optimistic viewpoint, the merger was discussed as a process and a strategy that bring power for internal mutual growth at national level toward an international visibility. The expected empowerment and growth, which would be accomplished through managing, unifying and sharing resources, was the reason for the optimistic views that consider the merger as an opportunity to position the university as both a national and international actor. In other words, the merger was intended to result in a university recognized as an international player rather than seven separate, minor actors that were not recognized at international level and thus never appearing on any rankings. However, as the results showed, the tendency of thinking that ‘bigger is better’ was not successful in the short term, which probably was expected from the start by the merger initiators, at least not when it comes to the merger of libraries. On the contrary, the merger process has resulted in a disconnection between management and the library system. A crucial challenge appears to be the mixture of different previous libraries where each one earlier could act relatively independently in relation to each other. An overarching outcome of the merger is conflicting perspectives and unfulfilled expectations.

From the pessimistic viewpoint, there is a disconnect problem between visions and practices that manifests in different layers and leads to different challenges. The challenges related to the merger include aspects of communication, organizational structure, contradicting views of libraries and librarians’ professional identity, and centralization of decision-making. The discrepancy between
centralization and geographically distributed resources and decision-making was the basis to the pessimistic view of the merger. There are economic constraints, and lack of communication channels that affect working conditions in the merger process. Consequently, resource sharing and integration of services appear as complex and daunting challenges. However, this appears to have been given lower priority by the management. Furthermore, there is a lack of managerial support and coordination strategies towards libraries. The lack of support also leads to a misinterpretation of the merger and its purpose as well as to the perceptions that the libraries were neglected. The disconnect problem that manifests in lack of economic funding and guidance creates a context of confusion and demoralization amongst library staff which can also lead to a degradation of library services.

In connection to the views of the merger, two different views of resource sharing emerged from the empirical data as well. Beside the view of resource sharing as a strategy of managing existing resources, there is also the view of resource sharing as something going on in practice. The former refers to resource sharing of abundance while the latter is connected to resource sharing of scarcity. It is important to highlight here, that the divide between the two perceptions of resource sharing as a strategy and as something that goes on in practice – abundance and scarcity – does not necessarily and always go between the two groups of participants (library staff and management), but it can actually fluctuate somewhat. Moreover, the two understandings of resource sharing are in conflicts, the notion of resource sharing in practice defies the notion of resource sharing as a strategy. However, most of the challenges can be ascribed to the merger itself, which was seen as a cumbersome process.

In addition to the views of the merger and resource sharing, the following chapter sheds light on practices in libraries as regards to the two views of the merger and resource sharing that were discussed in this chapter.
7 Practices at geographically dispersed libraries

7.1 Introduction and overview

The analysis leading to the results presented in this chapter is grounded in the sociocultural perspective established in the theory chapter. According to this perspective, library management and resource sharing is understood as enabled by a variety of mediating means. Consequently, library work and resource sharing are enabled by the availability or constrained by the lack of, for example, ICT equipment and other facilities at local libraries.

The chapter is based on empirical data, which include transcripts of 31 recorded interviews with library staff and library managers; notes from field observations; and documents. The documents include the UR library organizational chart, the library vision and mission, library job profiles and job descriptions, library rules and regulations as well as photos produced by the researcher during fieldwork.

The presentation of the results is structured in accordance with the second research question, i.e. What practices related to resource sharing and library management can be identified at the different libraries at University of Rwanda? The chapter is divided into the three following sections. The section after this introduction presents an overview of results concerning practices involving library management systems (LMS) and ICT equipment in libraries. The second section includes a presentation of results concerning practices at the different libraries. These are organized in two groups, i.e. (1) practices comprising library service activities, and (2) practices comprising leadership and organizational activities. The latter are presented as activities specific to each individual library, and being of the kind that bring library managers together outside their particular libraries and campuses/colleges. The third section focuses on data solely generated from the document study and presents results on resource sharing. The chapter ends with a chapter summary.
7.2 Library Management Systems and ICT equipment

In the context of the UR merger, it is crucial to prioritize a unified Library Management System (LMS) and ICT equipment for sharing resources among geographically dispersed libraries. Concerning LMS, only two main libraries are using an Integrated Library System (ILS) while four others maintain a manual system. Such an integrated system is used only at the main libraries (at college headquarter).

The disparities between libraries regarding LMS is a complex issue when it comes to resource sharing and harmonized ways of working at distance in different libraries. The following figure (figure 6) exemplifies such diversity.

![Figure 6: Illustration of different library systems (Screenshots and photos produced during the empirical fieldwork in 2016)](image)

This diversity becomes a challenge to resource sharing between libraries while at the local library, each system appears to be useful and to serve its purpose for the work in a stand-alone library. For instance,
figure 6 shows in the bottom layer (right and left sides) registry books of records of library use and statistics in an analog library while computerized libraries (in the upper layer) manage circulation of library items and generate statistics from the software. This diversity or dissimilarity constitutes a major challenge in terms of harmonization and reproduction of services in libraries. The diversity is also noted in the availability of equipment such as computers and reading space for users.

Figure 7 illustrates two libraries, which have more than one computer for library users. It informs also about reading space in these libraries. On the left side, the computers, which appear to be in a messy state and without appropriate seating arrangements, are ranged together with the library collections while on the right side, the computers are accessed in a separate reading room far from the shelves.

The number of computers varies from one library to another. However, there are libraries with no computers for users. During the observations, I found librarians who work under these circumstances. Figure 8 depicts a library that I visited during the fieldwork, which illustrates a situation with one computer used only for library administrative work. There were no computers assigned for users.
Figure 8 illustrates a lack of computers in this library, which can hamper the services to users. Considering the shift from back-end to front end services, the requirement in ICT equipment is of a paramount important. In state of the art libraries, a major part of library services is mediated by ICTs. The users are independently searching for information and accessing library resources. ICT equipment is key and the library space as presented in previous sections is still important. However, in this study the participants noted the inconsistency in terms of ICT and space in the libraries. This is elaborated further on in Chapter 8 as challenges to library management and resource sharing.

In terms of ICTs, UR libraries can be categorized in three groups. There are few, two out of 14, libraries that are computerized and have a fair Internet connectivity. There are libraries which are not computerized but connected to Internet. There are also those libraries, which are neither computerized nor connected to Internet. The local differences and the variation in circumstances for doing library work as shown in
this section foreground the working conditions and the activities that take place in the libraries, which are presented in the next section.

### 7.3 Activities at libraries

The subsequent sections present activities performed in libraries as described by library staff and library managers. Equipment and materials used by library staff to perform these activities are also discussed. To achieve their daily tasks, library staff use and need to interact with a range of different materials and equipment. These include different kinds of physical entity related to the library services, namely library collections, buildings, ICT equipment, (i.e. LMS, computers and internet capacity and availability) and guiding documents herein referred to as policy documents. The participants talked about the availability of these materials as facilitating library services and resource sharing. However, in most cases, the lack and inconsistency of these materials were seen to hinder library services and resource sharing.

Participants mentioned different library service activities in their daily work at their workplace. When performing such activities, library staff considered supporting various users and hence contributing to the mission of the university. While analyzing the empirical data guided by the sociocultural perspective on resource sharing, three themes of activities (as described further in this section) emerged from the data. The categorization of activities was done according to the similarities to fit a particular type of practice or group of activities as established in the coding books.

The first theme includes activities related to what the library staff termed ‘internal’ services, a part of library services, which is mainly invisible to the library visitors (i.e. researchers, students and other users) as well as to the university management. The participants regarded the activities constituting the internal services (e.g. cataloguing, classification, indexing of library materials) as requisites to the external services (e.g. lending and returning of library materials), i.e. those which comprise direct user-centered activities. As these two notions, *internal* and *external*, are complex conceptions used in the
context of the merger, I will use back-end and front-end in order to avoid confusion.

The second theme, described as “front-end”, includes user-oriented activities, i.e. services directed to users or activities that the library staff engage in for the sake of a direct user satisfaction.

The third theme encompasses activities related to competence development. These activities include both formal and informal activities related to individual and collegial capacity building. The library staff undertake the informal (in contrast to formal activities described in the job profiles and descriptions) activities as alternative or supplementary to the formal trainings. However, since there are contradicting views among participants of this study regarding the trainings, there is a need to come back to this issue in Chapter 8, where I discuss it in connection to motivation and promotion.

7.3.1 Back-end services

Historically, library services have been highly visible as face-to-face user services, front-end. As library resources have become digitized and available online, an increasing part of library work is performed back-end. This involves acquisition, curation and dissemination of digital resources. Such work is not readily visible to the users and it is easy for management to underestimate the value, skills and man-hours necessary to uphold online digital resources and other work that takes place at the back-end. At the same time, high quality access to a well-provided and maintained library can be seen as an obligatory infrastructure for any university. It is not possible for Rwandan researchers to position themselves within previous research without access to state-of-the-art scholarly publications. Another vital back-end service connected to the digital transformation involves bibliometric reviews that librarians can make in order to map the character and quality of research performed at UR and elsewhere. However, at the outset of the merger, digital back-end services appeared to be neglected at many libraries. Back-end services are diverse at different UR libraries depending on the location of the library, the number of staff, and the resources available. As illustrated in the following sections, back-end services differ between libraries with Internet connectivity and those without Internet.
As mentioned in Chapter 2, the study was initiated at the very beginning of the merger when libraries had merely started upon the process of working together. Thus, the digital transformation, which is expected to be enhanced in the merger, is not often reflected in actual activities but rather expressed as a goal to be reached in the future. Most of the activities referred to are connected to the traditional library services in the form of acquisition, cataloguing, and curation of information resources in an analog format. However, little was stated in connection to digital resources and support to researchers. As part of the services to researchers in the form of dissemination and publishing, a university repository was at its early stages of implementation.

Moreover, services concerning bibliometrics were not common (or at least not formalized) among libraries. Each library had its own way of managing library usage statistics mainly for the sake of internal planning for its activities and staff deployment in service shifts. The participants in the library group enumerated a number of activities they do as part of their daily work in preparation to or as a requisite to user-centered activities. The trained librarians accomplish most of these internal activities, which include intellectual and technical treatment (classification, indexing, and cataloguing) of library items before dissemination to different groups of users.

*As a library staff, I currently do classification of books. Before, I worked in acquisition service. It is planned that library staff rotate from one service to another. I feel satisfied and confident when a user can find a book on shelves following the call numbers [classification tag] that I put on books (LS).*

This statement is typical for many librarians experiencing that the service is primarily connected to the analog collections and on-site services. The library staff points at various activities at different service units in the library. Such services, focusing on analog resources, are common in most libraries due to inconsistency of ICT infrastructure and internet connection. According to some library staff, the work activities in libraries vary depending on the job position of the staff, the geographical location and the situation of the library (e.g. computerized or not).
I perform other administrative duties as assigned by the director, such as verification of acquisitions, classification, cataloguing, sign clearance forms, check library database update for example to remove weeded materials, etc. (LS).

This amounts to a relatively long list of various tasks that all are oriented toward back-end services. Notably, what the staff state that they do in the respective libraries differs somewhat, which is visible when the above quotation is compared with the following one.

The routine activities include checking in and out of library materials (circulation) and signing clearance form, giving guidance to library users: lecturers, students and other staff (LM).

The slight difference concerning what work task that are brought up in the two quotations are likely to depend on the different working conditions in the respective libraries. Libraries where, for example, a LMS has been installed result in different work tasks compared to libraries without LMS and, in extension, perhaps also in a slight different professional vocabulary. In addition to back-end activities priori to dissemination and circulation of library items in analog libraries, the library staff also highlights extra activities specific to a computerized library.

What I do is to make sure that I perform my duties well as required or prescribed. My duty is to help users to find what they want either using the software [name of software], or guiding them where to get them in printed form on shelves or e-resources (LS).

Again, front-end services are seen as prescribed duties involving services to on-site users, i.e. visitors to the library rather than online visitors. In the statement, the library staff articulates activities in a computerized library where library staff can help users to access both printed and digital resources. Beside activities related to the treatment of library items, the library staff indicated other back-end activities related to library services within an institution. With these activities, the library staff aim at maintaining the libraries functional and part of the entire institution.
We discuss our problems internally, we rank them by priority and we report to the dean of school who possibly can solve them and if not, he or she takes them to the college level. For us library staff, we only follow up and wait (LS).

Here again it appears that the management of internal problems may be different at separate libraries. The strategy of ranking and thereafter reporting upwards is one strategy, but there are also other strategies such as advocacy as elaborated on in subsequent sections. In this account, the library staff highlights the teamwork in the libraries and points at functional and managerial relations existing between the dean of school and college or campus management in order to accomplish library services. What is here demonstrated is a specific kind of managerial work process where library staff are disempowered and can only wait for ‘a go ahead’ from decision makers. This is further elaborated on in Chapter 8.

The category of back-end activities constitutes a major part of what librarians do, but is mostly invisible to management, researchers and other library users who therefore do not see the librarians’ work to make resources available. This kind of work must be done in order to have something to offer the users through “front-end activities”. If the “back-end activities did not happen, there would be no activities taking place at the front-end, “front-end activities” that are immediately related to library users, as discussed in the next section.

7.3.2 Front-end activities

The participants emphasize that these activities are user-centered. While most activities in the library are in some sense user-centered, this category of activities includes those involving direct contacts or interactions with users. The contacts can be physical (face to face) or mediated by technology. These activities are achieved with the aim of facilitating access to information sources by assisting users in searching for information and through information literacy education to users. According to the participants, this category of activities is the most recognized by the management and the public including the library users. However, at different libraries there are different ways to talk about front-end services and variations in library work.
I am like an intermediary between information materials and users. I help users with information search, especially students. I guide and orient them where and how to get resources and information (LS).

This library staff takes an intermediary approach to front-end activities in a non-digitized library environment. The focus is on serving the users who visit the physical library by facilitating them to access information and information materials.

I help in providing information needed. My responsibility is to make sure that users get the information they need, by providing e-resources, trying to satisfy their needs in achieving their academic goals (LS).

This excerpt reflects a provider approach to front-end services in another library with a different setting. The different activities accomplished in this library aim to support users by providing information and information materials. It is clear that activities in libraries differ from one library to another following the various categories of users they serve and their interests, but also depending on the availability of, for example, computers and digital systems for information searching. There are libraries that mainly serve – in addition to teaching staff and researchers – undergraduate students; others serve master and Ph.D. students while others serve all these categories. In the different circumstances as described here, the library staff may take a different approach to front-end services. For example in the following quote, education for information literacy is emphasized.

What I do as a librarian, following my responsibility and our library’s daily activities, is to welcome, help and orient students. We serve different types of students: undergraduates who come directly from secondary school and most of them do not know how to use a library: how and where to find a document, and how to use it or how to find what they want in a book at hand. I do not work alone, we work as a team. We help students to find the information they need from the library. We teach students how to search for information and to get the right (relevant to their needs) information timely. We also help teachers. I try to help
In this excerpt, the library staff points to a teaching approach that characterizes the front-end services regarding a variety of users and different services provided to them. In the first part of the quote, the participant highlights the relationship to users and education for information literacy aimed at undergraduate students while in the second part, (s)he refers to support offered to teaching staff. The emphasis is on the collective of library staff, working as a team, which is presented as a strength in the way of forming the organization in order to support the local needs. The use of ‘we’ supplies an understanding of a community with a certain identity within the institution. However, the community building involves challenges as discussed later in this chapter.

In addition to different approaches to front-end services, there are differences in the way practices are enacted and described at various libraries, for example, they vary according to different services or work areas.

*While working at the reference desk, I used to help users to get what they want when they disposed certain information on study subjects, which could help to locate the information materials in the library. One way is to search for documents for them on the shelves and another one is to train them how to do it themselves.* (LS).

The design, organization and use of physical spaces at this library are features that influence how desk activities and relations with users are talked about. Included in the statement above is a teaching approach that serves to help the on-site library users to be able to independently search for information in physical materials and online sources.

In summary, front-end activities are local in character, oriented toward a certain community of users who come to libraries. Due to the absence of functional digital library systems, they are rarely oriented toward distant library users. The front-end services thus depend largely on the size of the library, the types of users and available means (e.g. internet coverage or not) at libraries. In contrast, back-end services are divided...
in the sense that some are supporting the local activities whereas others are geared toward digital online services for users not visiting the local library in person.

In addition to back and front-end activities, the participants also talked about activities that library staff engage in for their own training and capacity development in order to perform their work.

### 7.3.3 Competence development oriented activities

Competence development is needed in order to catch up with the strong trends within digitization and digitalization within academic libraries internationally. Nonetheless, the merger also necessitates competence development that provides harmonization between activities at the various libraries. In what follows, competence development oriented activities are such that staff engage in to further develop their knowledge and skills. The individual activities and those between peers include – but are not limited to – searching for information, sharing information, learning how to use different tools, equipment and new technology, locating information materials and library items. In most cases, these activities are informal and undertaken by individuals or between peers for particular reasons. At different libraries, the staff conceptualize library work in different ways.

> I contact other librarians in other campuses and colleges. I call or send emails when I have a particular need or a problem to solve, for example, searching for information, but of course, our contacts are not regular (LS).

Here, the competence development is informal and seen as collaborative work among library staff. Such collaboration is necessary for library staff to complement each other in order to fill gaps connected to skills and materials in libraries.

> As colleagues, we meet to exchange ideas and knowledge; some come to us to get information materials that they do not have in their libraries. As library staff, we love each other and we struggle to improve our profession (LS).

The above statement outlines the contours of a community of practice in which library work is viewed as being performed by professionals
that grow together, as co-workers who, despite displaying differences, are aiming for a common goal pertaining to the same profession.

These two quotes communicate different ways of conceptualizing library work. They also feature different ways in which the library staff form a community of professionals among them in order to support each other. This kind of community building might have been existing between individual librarians or library staff before the merger. However, with the merger, building the community of practice is referred to as crucial since librarians are to work together under one administrative unit and serving the same community of users located in several campuses and colleges. Moreover, despite the differences among library staff, many participants argued that they strive for a common professional identity.

Beside the individual contacts, there are also formal activities in large groups occasionally organized by the university management, and/or in collaboration with partners.

*Formal meetings are not regular but occasionally we get together while invited by the university’s authorities (LS).*

The UR merger brought together different people with various background and working in distinctly separate settings. Regular formal meetings would be one way for people to get to know each other and to share experiences and ways of working toward a harmonized working system.

*The librarians working at our college of [X name of college]... we meet because we have to meet for planning activities at college level. However, we occasionally meet other colleagues from other campuses and colleges in meetings, trainings and/or workshops organized in collaboration with our partners mainly from Sweden. Besides that, it is only when you meet someone on the street and you greet each other as colleagues and no more (LS).*

While in the previous chapter, the merger was seen as way to unite, control and manage resources and for helping people to get to know each other, this excerpt denotes the lack of formal meetings for library
staff. The lack of formal meetings for library staff pushes them to take own initiatives for engaging informally with peers. The above excerpts point at different kinds of activities and contacts they make individually or involving many of them. The informal activities appear to have become evident and necessary for enabling library services that have the potential to result in user satisfaction. These activities are to some extent undertaken as an alternative to the almost non-existing formal fora and meetings for exchange of ideas and work experiences. However, these informal activities are partly geared to community building, especially within the merger. The librarians consider the importance of building a community of professionals in order to overcome the challenges they face due to the dispersion in geographical places and to what is perceived as limited understandings among management concerning librarianship as a profession.

In connection to community building and lack of fora for library staff, librarians engage in advocacy, which they consider as a way to make their voice heard at different hierarchical instances including the UR senior management. The library staff and library managers also mentioned taking part in advocacy whenever possible. Some of these activities consist of advocating and reporting library activities and concerns to the library management, which also reports to the university management.

We report our problems to our bosses and only our boss can solve them but the process is slow as library directors also have to wait for senior managers (LS).

This reflects the lack of local decision making at libraries and emphasizes the distance between libraries and the central management. This disconnection leads to unnecessarily lengthy processes. The centralized organizational structure appears here to keep both library staff and library managers in a weak position concerning decision-making. It is possible to discern in the interview transcripts and field notes a sense of disempowerment among library staff, which is also perceived at college and campus level. This is elaborated further on in the next chapter in connection to library and resource management at a distance.
Advocacy for library matters is occasionally depending on the possibility to talk to senior managers or to people in the central government administration. What the advocacy more specifically is about varies amongst the participants, which is reflected in the subsequent quotations.

*I decided to advocate for recruitment of library staff. We really need the management to know that the library is a professional unit in need of qualified, competent, and committed staff instead of those who have failed in other positions as we have them in this library (LM).*

This reflects that the staff engage in advocacy due to the problems they face at local libraries. In connection to the disconnect problem introduced in Chapter 6, advocacy appears to be a substantial strategy for library staff to overcome related problems. This is developed further in the discussion chapter.

*We do advocacy and we even talk to, for example, members of the Parliament in order to inform people about librarians’ situation, especially their job classification (LM).*

The library manager articulates that they engage in advocacy with different people and or administrative bodies for various reasons. As can be seen in the two quotations above, advocacy can be conducted with the goal of reaching either UR management or influential actors outside of the university.

The participants motivated their engagement in advocacy with the argument that they perceive troublesome irregularities in the decision-making process. Sometimes, there was a delay in the implementation of decisions from meetings concerning library issues. Such a delay can be linked to the hierarchical distance and the lack of means at libraries to implement what has been decided. In other cases, the resolutions did not lead to something significant for libraries. This can be connected to the decisions not always being anchored in situated library practices, but rather in the expectations linked to the visionary documents of the university. Sometimes, these resolutions appear to be ignored and sometimes lost in the bureaucracy in the files and folders in the management offices because no one else except librarians is able to
follow them up. Due to the library staff’s sense of disempowerment and as a consequence of the centralized and top-down organization structure in which the hierarchical structure does not work, library staff engage in advocacy. This is further discussed in Chapter 8.

7.3.4 Library leadership and organizational activities

Library directors are those who mainly are tasked with library leadership and organizational activities. There are similarities in different libraries but also differences depending on the size, the status (computerized or not) and location of library (main campus or branch). There are also common activities that bring together the library managers.

As directors, we have a forum; we are trying to work together...
I know that at under some project at national level, we meet for some trainings. Now at UR level we have a forum for library directors: we have meetings of library directors though it is still at a beginning stage (LM).

This reflects the needs for formal planning meetings and harmonization of library services at different locations. In addition to the activities of common interest for all libraries, there are also activities involving library managers at their respective workplaces for a constant running of library services.

My duties and responsibilities include supervision of daily activities of staff in the library. I do library action plan in accordance to the university’s action plan (LM).

This statement highlights the necessity for activities at different libraries to connect to the university mission and agenda. However, in the prevailing situation characterised by the disconnect problem, which manifests in different ways, libraries’ action plans appear to be bound by the university plan, the economic constraints and important stakeholders’ limited understandings about libraries. In this regard, it is important to see the connections between library action plans and the university action plan and how they influence one another. In which ways the University action plan can be useful for developing a library action plan is not clear. Nor is it obvious in which ways library directors feel free to develop the library action plan and in which ways this kind
of plans can influence further development of the university action plans. These matters are discussed in Chapter 8 in connection to the issue of centralization of decision-making where library directors avow to be disempowered in their managerial tasks.

7.4 Activities, tools and resources at libraries

The participants expressed different views about various prioritized activities and services at their libraries. From the analysis of the empirical data, five main categories of activities have been identified as summarized and presented in table 4 below. The table includes keywords and phrases, which emerged from the interview transcripts during the coding process. The keywords are the most frequent and relevant (to the object of the study) that the participants used to describe their actual and main activities as well as the tools, resources and other necessities that they use or wished they to a greater extent could have at their disposal. In the table, the keywords are grouped in accordance with the five overarching categories of activities. The table serves to illustrate how these activities taken together constitute the library staff’s multifaceted work practice.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of activities</th>
<th>Keywords and phrases about activities</th>
<th>Tools and resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Back-end services</strong></td>
<td>• Curation of information resources</td>
<td>• Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Acquisition</td>
<td>• Competences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cataloguing</td>
<td>• Skilled people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Classification</td>
<td>• Time allotment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Indexing</td>
<td>• Repositories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Shelving</td>
<td>• Databases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Registering of records in repositories and databases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Front-end services</strong></td>
<td>• Assisting users in finding information and library items</td>
<td>• Internet connectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Guiding</td>
<td>• Library space (e.g. for researchers, group discussion, and reading)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Orienting</td>
<td>• Software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Listening</td>
<td>• Collections: Printed and digital information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Searching/browsing</td>
<td>• Communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Caring about (user services, needs)</td>
<td>• Computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Leading (other staff)</td>
<td>• Databases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Informing</td>
<td>• Repository</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Disseminating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Displaying information materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Serving users</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teaching for information literacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual library staff centered activities (capacity building or self-education training activities)</strong></td>
<td>• Updating knowledge and skills</td>
<td>• Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Emailing</td>
<td>• E-mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Making phone calls</td>
<td>• Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Attending formal meetings among professionals</td>
<td>• Library space (e.g. for office)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Having informal or individual meetings/contacts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Thinking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Discussing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reporting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Communicating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Searching the web</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peer to peer or in group activities group</strong></td>
<td>• Attending informal meetings</td>
<td>• Emails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Attending formal meetings</td>
<td>• Reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Arranging or attending workshops and or conferences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Arranging or attending trainings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Chatting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative work</strong></td>
<td>• Organizing services</td>
<td><strong>Meetings</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Planning work</td>
<td><strong>Reports</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Informal contacts</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Formal meetings</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Computers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Software</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Overview of activities in libraries
Beside the actual activities, the library staff and directors noted envisioned activities that they would have liked to accomplish but failed to due to various reasons. These activities can be located in one or another of the five above-mentioned categories (column 1). However, they are presented separately in Chapter 8 in the section on challenges to managing libraries and resources at distance. In the next section, human resources are viewed in connection to the documents collected from the UR libraries.

7.4.1 Document study of human resources at libraries

In addition to the participants’ statements regarding human resources at libraries and their competences, documents were analysed in order to reach the results presented in this section. The documents include administrative documents such as job profiles, which describe and determine the educational qualifications and requirements in terms of degree and other skills for competent library personnel. Moreover, the UR library organization chart and the data on library staff allocated to libraries, which were provided by the directors during the fieldwork, were also analysed. Quotations from interviews were also used as supporting evidences.

As the merger has been an ongoing process, it is difficult to present a clear picture of the staff placement with recruitments and replacement still being processed. It was also difficult to know who was where. It becomes a fundamental challenge to a merger process if the sharing of resources proceeds without a clear overview of available resources in the form of libraries, branch libraries, number of staff, level and character of education of staff as well as type of employment.

The statistics (University of Rwanda, 2018) show that the number of the UR administrative and support staff decreased from 1026 to 743 between the academic years of 2013-2014 and 2017-2018. Figures provided by library managers in June-August 2016 showed that there were altogether 75 staff members in the library system, including directors. This is the same number as indicated in the UR facts 2015 that was adapted and represented in table 5 below. Among these 75, 23 were under temporary contract employment. Still, there was some confusion regarding placement of staff in campuses. Meanwhile, considering the restructuring that took place in September 2016 and
which was aiming at reducing the number of administrative staff, it is possible to expect a drastic reduction of numbers of library staff as well.

Table 5 lists different campuses, the number of libraries in each campus, the number of library personnel and the colleges accommodated in each campus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus</th>
<th>Number of libraries in the campus</th>
<th>Number of Staff in library</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Type of employment</th>
<th>Colleges present at the campus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Busogo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>GAVM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyamishaba</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>CMHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyarugenge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>CST, CMHS, GAVM, CASS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remera</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>CE, CBE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gikondo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>CBE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubirizi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>CAVM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kicukiro</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>CMHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byumba (SNM)*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>CMHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyagatare</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>CAVM, CBE, CST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rukara</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kibungo SNM</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>CMHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rusizi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>CBE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musanze</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huye</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>CASS, CBE, GAVM, CST, CMHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>52</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*: School of Nursing Midwifery #: the library was not operational due to lack of staff.

Table 5: Library status by campus (UR facts and figures, 2015)

The number of staff in libraries illustrated in the table 5, can perhaps be seen as reasonable. If this number is equally distributed over the UR library system, there would be approximately three staff per library. However, when compared to a state of the art library of the kind that in the visions for the UR is referred to as a “modern library”, it turns out that the staffing of the UR libraries is insufficient. As an example, Lund University in Sweden is comparable in size with the UR. They have nearly 30 000 students and 144, 5 full year employed librarians, which equals 205 students per 1 librarian (Kungliga Biblioteket, n.d). The number of graduates at the UR is circa 33 000 students (University of Rwanda, 2018). With approximately 50 members of staff trained in LIS, the amount of students per 1 librarian at the UR equals 660.
In connection to the amount of library staff, the following library organizational chart is a potential guiding document for allocation of staff and working groups at different libraries.

![Library Organization Chart]

Figure 9: Official library organization chart

Number in brackets refer to amount of staff with a certain function.

The organizational chart (available at the university library website: https://library.ur.ac.rw/node/168) represents an overview of the UR library system with the library staff distributed over five central units: “Systems, Web Services, Electronic Resources and Social Media Services”; “Digital and Archival Services”; “Collection Management Services”; “Research and Student Engagement Services”; and “Campus Library Services”. The sum of the number of staff (figures in parentheses) in the various positions counts to altogether 111 members of staff. However, as can be seen in table 5, the actual number of library staff amounts to 75. It is therefore reasonable to view the above chart, which is displayed as the official organizational structure of libraries, as a representation of an ideal structure communicating a vision for the future. In this sense, it constitutes a map that does not meet the actual landscape of libraries. Despite this official organizational chart, the actual (or at least functional albeit informal) library organizational
structure that reflects the present state of the UR libraries can be illustrated in a pyramidal form with a large base of campus libraries with the DVCAAR at the top and the university librarian positioned in direct connection to the DVCAAR.

In connection to practices at libraries, the participants viewed the organizational structure to be problematic as expressed in the following.

*As it is by now, even if there is a university librarian I still see it as a challenge since no director will report officially to him/her (LM).*

This statement supports the analysis of the chart as a visionary document rather than a description of the actual organizational structure. It furthermore reflects that the chart can be seen as a manifestation of the disconnect problem between the visions and practices at libraries. There is thus a clear difference between the actual, informal structure and the official and sanctioned representation of the organization. This difference reflects two separate but interconnected issues where the first concerns the different ways in which a library system can be structured as reflecting the actual organization and division of work. It also reflects that it is possible to map and describe an organization through an organizational chart, which reflects a structure that is not recognizable by those who are positioned in the chart. Of the five central units appearing in the chart, only three are vaguely similar to existing units, namely:

- Library directors, referred to as “Head campus library services (7)”;
- Librarians, referred to as “Senior assistant librarian, campus library services (12)”; and
- Assistant librarians, referred to as “Assistant Librarian (34)”.

It is not only the organizational chart (figure 9) that does not seem to fit the actual organization and distribution of the work going on in the libraries. There is also an official document that serves to describe “revised job profiles” (figure 10). Also this document displays remarkable differences between the present situation and what is claimed in the document. These kinds of contradictions can be
connected to changes resulting from the merger process. The two documents were issued after the merger and were supposed to take effect from 2015. For instance, the job profiles in figure 10 were approved in [date early] 2015. This means that subsequently the recruitment was supposed to follow the requirements in this document. However, not so many staff have been recruited after 2015, which can explicate the presence of staff who do not align with these requirements.

The position of ‘Librarian Assistant’ is portrayed in the organizational chart as the lowest category in the hierarchical library organizational structure. However, according to the discussions among the participants in the study who are working in libraries – as it emerges through interview transcripts and field notes – the lowest category is commonly referred to as “assistant librarian”, a category which is placed elsewhere in the official organizational chart (second last at the right-down side of figure 9). According to the revised job profiles (figure 10), this position encompasses staff with diploma and bachelor’s degree in LIS with at least two years of experience (A0 and A1, column 5). The position of “Librarian” is entitled to those who hold a bachelor’s degree (A0) in LIS and those who acquired this position from the merged institutions. Master’s degree (cf. column 5, figure 10) in LIS is required for a position of a library director.
The classification of library staff in the job profile document does also comprise an associated set of competences and skills that is required in order to accomplish different work tasks in libraries and for holding a certain position and title. The position and title refer to the hierarchical position on the scale (column 4, figure 10) ranging from 3.II at the bottom to 7.II at the top. These positions determine connected advantages and salaries. The lower down a staff is positioned at the bottom of the scale and thus of the organizational structure, the lower is the salary and connected benefits.

The study of documents also points to a disconnect problem. While the job profiles in figure 10 suggest a librarian to hold a bachelors’ degree in library and information science (LIS), the figures presented in table 5 above show that only 49 out of 75 library staff have a LIS qualification (all levels combined, i.e. bachelor’s degree, diploma and masters) spread out in seven out of 14 libraries. This indicates a shortfall of
qualified librarians. This shortage is likely to be one out of many plausible reasons for why many libraries are staffed with unqualified personnel from other fields than librarianship as expressed later in Chapter 8.

7.4.2 Competencies at libraries

Competences of librarians can be seen as partly coming out of formal education, and partly developed outside of the formal educational system, e.g. learning by working. Competences thus need to be refined by work-based practices as well as further developed through additional educational activities. Competences are necessarily inseparable from professions and conventions of professionalism such as within librarianship.

In order to shed further light on the participants’ statements concerning competences of library staff and services offered by libraries, documents from the former institutions such as library rules and regulations or library policies (depending on how they were named) are included as data. There is therefore a certain diversity in form and content regarding what these documents provide and what they cover. These documents indicate the practical side in libraries, especially in terms of circulation of information material, and that not a lot – if anything at all – has changed in terms of library services and working routines (this is discussed further in Chapter 8).

While analyzing the documents, the views of the competences at libraries are in relation to the UR’s aspiration of modern academic libraries. Such an aspiration implies major changes related to digital transformation. Considering the processes of harmonization and modernization, which were discussed in Chapter 6, the digital transformation is a context for numerous shifts in practice in the profession of librarianship and everyday activities including the front-end/back-end shift. For instance, the shifts to online services such as digital curation and institutional repository may require sophisticated infrastructure and competences of library staff compared to the existing ones. This means to take a step further in modernization and harmonization of equipment in different libraries. In addition to a range of competencies that can be expected to be required as a consequence of an increased digitization, the staff must also develop such
competences that are needed for pooling and sharing of resources over a system of libraries where situated work practices emanate from sometimes radically different contexts.

Even if many participants are expecting certain changes to take place as a result of the merger process, including a digital transformation that can enable UR libraries to act as one unit even if it is geographically distant, the following statement indicates a certain skepticism in this regard.

*We are still working as before, infrastructure is still the same, no new building nor library management software...each library works on its own. I do not see anything really; I would expect to see changes and improvement in libraries (LM).*

This library manager points to activities in libraries, which have not changed in accordance to the expectations. The lack of an appropriate united system that could bring different libraries together is seen to compound problems of distance between libraries, which results in each library working as a stand-alone unit. This connects to what libraries can achieve as units at their institutions. The participants expressed their views on the competences of library staff, which are seen as challenges to practices in libraries including resource sharing as discussed later in Chapter 8.

### 7.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter, practices at the UR libraries are presented and discussed against a background of geographical dispersion and a range of site-specific library characteristics. The various activities constituting these practices, such as back and front-end services, organizing and leadership, are similar throughout the libraries, even though there are, for example, striking differences concerning digitization and availability of ICTs. The uneven distribution of resources, for example in the form of staff and equipment, among the libraries is experienced as constraining practices at several of the libraries. It appears that even if libraries are administratively organized under one umbrella of UR, each library is still working in its own way. This variation in work practices is manifested in, for example, different rules and regulations, working hours, and ways in which library items are circulated. The
fundamental problems that are caused by the geographical differences are not fully acknowledged in the context of the merger. The competences needed to respond to the requirements of the geographical distance involve, for example, the ability to integrate ICTs in order to facilitate shifts from an analog to a digital environment and to ensure the transition from traditional to modern library services. This transition demands some sort of leapfrogging (discussed further in Chapter 8) in order to fill the gaps and disparities among the libraries and to not only embrace but actually realize the aspirations of a state of the art library system. However, the establishment of a harmonized way of working with ICTs and appropriate resources appeared to participants as a challenge in their work and, in extension, also as a challenge to resource sharing in geographically dispersed libraries as presented in the following chapter.
8 Challenges related to library management at distance

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the focus is on problems and challenges of library management at a distance. In the context of the merger of the UR, the problem of geographical distance is a management problem in general as it involves multidisciplinary campuses/colleges and scattered staff and students of the same college in different campuses. The geographical distance is also a challenge to resource management and sharing between libraries in particular. This is not least due to libraries at different locations having developed their own ways of working, which are situated and rooted within a local context and not necessarily replicable in other contexts. The process of harmonization and modernization of the UR libraries expected as an outcome from the merger, involves substantial changes of different kinds including the introduction of a strong infrastructure to overcome the geographical distance. This requires modernizing and improving resources in order to be able to share them.

However, pushing for the modern academic library at the UR being a priority, this process would require adopting the notion of ‘leapfrogging’ for most of libraries. This notion entails speeding up the process of harmonization and modernization of library infrastructure in order to align the development of the library to the envisioned development of the university. The modernization of the library also involves the staff professional development, i.e. their various skills, competencies and literacies. The kind of library strived for would fit both old and new tasks and be in line with the type of modern digital libraries that support research as suggested by Nolin (2013).

In this chapter, where the participants from all the groups talk about resource sharing in connection to the envisioned modern academic library is in focus, the previously mentioned disconnect problem (see Chapter 1) emerges. It manifests in connection to the context of geographical distance and appears at different layers of the university and its libraries, in connection to management of libraries, resources, and in relation to decision-making.
8.1.1 Geographical distance and library management

Against the background of the dispersion of campuses and colleges, and in relation to the differences noted between merged institutions as presented in the previous chapters, the participants noted various problems. These involve multidisciplinary campuses where campuses accommodate students and staff that belong to different colleges and thus different academic programs and disciplines.

"My first choice, my first plan would be seeing my college on the same place, but if that is not the case let us reduce, then concentrate resources where they can be used... I do not like this multidisciplinary; it is good for scientists to share experience, but not good for management (SM)."

In this account, the manager opposes the development of the multidisciplinary organization of research due to management issues, emphasizing the complexity of managing staff and students scattered in different campuses. Having a multidisciplinary campus and/or colleges scattered across the country was seen as a threat to efficiency and performance of library staff.

"...we have some competent librarians scattered all over the campuses though the number is still low. The placement within the merger is still a constraint because even those who were transferred to my campus are now being taken back to their initial campuses (LM)."

The concern in this excerpt is not only about management of human resources scattered in different workplaces. There is also a sense of limited long-term planning as regards the movement of staff. Once a need has been identified at one place and staff moved, this immediately creates a void making another reshuffle necessary. The geographical distance between campuses is a major challenge to the efficient use of library staff, especially in a merger of institutions with different working traditions. In addition to that, there is also the problem of misallocation of materials connected to the geographical distance.

"I find that I have books for economics that are there in the shelves and nobody will come to consult them, so the merger would have come to sort out such challenges that let the right resources be in the right place for use. If somebody is looking for materials"
that concern X [teaching subject], he/she would go to the library of X [college]. And to the Z [college] for books related to [Z teaching subject], or to [Y college] for resources related to [Y teaching subject] and so forth, but there are some scattered resources here and there that are not put to proper use (LS).

With this account, the library staff points at the lack of reasonable distribution and use of library resources/collections. The concern is about how scattered materials can be taken to where they can be used. This suggests strategies of matching the situation of libraries to the necessary resources in order to meet and satisfy the needs at different libraries. Otherwise, even the resources that exist might be misused. Moreover, participants also indicated challenges related to inadequacy and scarcity of human resources and other resources including infrastructure and guidelines regarding resource sharing.

8.2 Problems of infrastructure and guidelines

A merger of geographically dispersed institutions require previous existence of, or quick development of, specific infrastructures and in particular broadband Internet access and, from a library perspective, a unified library management system with appropriate interoperability and compliance with international standards.

When discussing the historical background of the merged institutions, participants pointed at various challenges related to infrastructure. Beside an overall lack of infrastructure (e.g. ICTs), the participants noted the asymmetry and incompatibility of the existing infrastructure from previous institutions. In different instances, participants expressed the scarcity of various resources. They considered some of the resources not to be adapted to the new context and requirements of a modern university. In the subsequent statement, a manager reflects upon the slow progress concerning provision of computers, but still, notes that some progress is made despite disparity amongst campuses.

[T]here is a difference between campuses for example in terms of the number of computers. However, we are moving ahead so it is not that we are stagnated and if I compare ...I see that the library is still small because it is never complete for any organization but compared to what I saw when we started and now there is a progress (SM).
Progress can be measured in various ways and one of the most concrete indicators is the number of computers and their connectivity within a congruent infrastructure. If improvements can be measured on this account, it would appear to show that the merger in some sense is helping libraries develop. However, such a perspective might also lead to an overestimation of what increased computing infrastructure can contribute. Librarians and library managers in different settings are exposed to the same uncertainty.

*For example, we have a problem of computers or laptops, we have many users but we do not have enough required ICT labs and equipment to help them to access to e-resources (LM).*

The mismatch between ICT resources and the number of users constitutes a challenge to the achievement of services and facilitation that libraries are expected to provide to users. Even though the lack of ICT resources vary among libraries, in most libraries it constitutes a combination of various types of missing equipment.

*Infrastructure covers many things: materials like computers, like internet connectivity...and this has a big impact on how we, librarians, perform our goals (LS).*

From the perspective of this librarian, it is easy to understand just how much and in which ways the addition of Internet and connected computers might contribute to this particular library. It refers also to what extent the lack of those resources affect the performance of library staff and, in extension, the running of the whole library. What the library staff communicates in the quotation above is also common for most of the librarians in the different contexts of the UR, whether in analog or digital work where the improvement in ICTs is seen as a fundamental value to the libraries.

*The first difficulty is one linked to [the observation] that our library is not computerized; we are still using a manual system. Another challenge is that we are still using an old French DDC [Dewey decimal classification] version; we do not have the latest version. This may mislead us in classifying documents (LS).*

Here, it is emphasized that it is not only a matter of linking to Internet resources. The old manual system must also be transitioned into new technology and existing manual data migrated. This is also an issue of
strategically sequencing in order. Implemented too early, addition of new technology may serve to create confusion and hard work with dual systems simultaneously. Considering the nature and mission of the former institutions, the infrastructure was almost appropriate in that time, but it became obsolete within the newly formed university with new teaching programs and research orientation. In the following account, the emphasis is on inadequacy of infrastructure from a former institution in the current university.

*I don’t see any new infrastructure, which is challenging...yeah..., we have been training technicians in [subject...] everything including the library at that time was not bad but it is still the same... and yet we are in a university where we are talking about being a world class university...! (SM).*

This senior manager recognizes the gap in infrastructure when comparing the former institution to the new university in the light of a latent understanding of how infrastructure should be developed. The statement shows that little was done to upgrade the infrastructure to the university standards and its ambition of becoming a research-led university. While the infrastructure needs to be upgraded to reach the level of modern libraries, the notion of ‘leapfrogging’ is still merely rhetorical.

*In this college, it is not a university infrastructure [...] rather a secondary school as per the historical background of the previous institute. We don’t have resources to make progress (SM).*

The account emphasizes the problems in relation to infrastructure such as appropriate buildings, equipment and personnel required for an institution to be a functional part of a university. The participant is skeptic towards the expected achievement from the merger in comparison to the existing resources. In line with how the concept is explicated in the theory chapter, infrastructure development concerns both new technology and trained staff with a variety of competencies and literacies, especially digital literacy to navigate and fit in the digital environment. In this regards, many library staff recognized the important role of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) in building their capacity. However, it was seen to be insufficient compared to the needs in trainings as discussed later in
Chapter 9 in relation to the suggested solutions to the prevailing problems.

The infrastructure in the former institutions was serving the purpose of training undergraduate students. However, the same infrastructure is still serving in the university, which now is aiming at producing highly qualified postgraduate students. For example, the reading space in the library have not changed even though the number of students and researchers has increased, nor is the collection coverage updated or upgraded to the needs of the current community of students and researchers.

The lack of infrastructure, equipment and facilities were seen as major challenges for the UR library services to work together as one unit. The following excerpt conveys the concern about the lack of ICT infrastructure and equipment.

> You know... the ICT network and facilities are still a problem to make all campuses interconnected. Some of the campuses are not connected to internet, for others internet is very slow, this makes it difficult for a person in one campus to access online resources available in other campuses (SM).

The statement illustrates that the UR libraries uphold different problems of Internet connectivity: no Internet access, uneven Internet access, and a variety of broadband connectivity. Therefore, there are both substantial problems in collecting resources outside of the UR as well as connectivity among the various libraries of the UR. The campuses being far away from each other, ICT is a key tool to facilitate the sharing of digital resources. However, its modest status hinders the achievement of this aim.

Apart from difficulties linked to ICT infrastructure, the participants also mentioned a lack of guidelines and a clear agenda for how to work together and share resources. In connection to ICT infrastructure, which is seen as key to resource sharing, the lack of proper guidelines was also taken as hampering resource sharing in different ways. The following account points to the lack of principles and guidelines regarding resource sharing.

> There is a need to lay down principles for resource sharing taking into account the size of what is being handled. To me a
good way to share resources is to follow proper guidelines and principles that are accepted. This helps to share resources in a proper manner by taking into account the needs of each library and its users. It is also a way to avoid discontentment (SM).

Earlier, such principles were established locally at the different libraries. In the above statement, a drawback is connected to the process of the merger in relation to the non-existence of policy and guidelines that could serve as foundations for resource sharing. Together, the merged libraries have a variety of guidelines that were formulated before the merger, which in different ways conflict with each other. There was an obvious need for a unified set of principles, which, nonetheless, were not available. As appeared in Chapter 6, when resource sharing is being presented as an ideal and raison d’être of the merger, one requires clear ideas with an overarching unified code as well as an understanding of the different situated practices going on throughout the dispersed libraries. It is quite difficult to efficiently share resources in a formalized manner without having a framework for how to do it. Moreover, within the merger context, sharing of resources requires not only modern infrastructures and a clear framework, but also enough skilled and digital literate staff. Several of the participants mentioned an insufficient number of qualified staff as a challenge connected to the dispersion of colleges and campuses. This is the problem in focus in the subsequent section.

8.3 Scarcity of human resources

Insufficient human resources appears to be a fundamental problem of mergers. To some extent, mergers are expected to deal with previously autonomous units becoming overlapping. This could lead to processes of downsizing. However, it is a fundamental problem if previously autonomous units already are too poorly staffed as, arguably, the case were for several of the libraries before the merger.

With the expectation that the merger aims for rational use and sharing of available resources, scarcity would not be the case in this study. However, as mergers are often charged with idealized visions, while making this investigation, scarcity issues quickly appeared in the interviews. On this note, participants mentioned difficulties in relation to quality and quantity of human resources.
In relation to quality of human resources, there is a scarcity of relevant competencies. A prominent strand in the empirical data is participants talking about a lack of trained and qualified staff. This concerns a lack of library staff educated for librarianship but also in different types of literacies, such as actual (e.g. in English language) and digital literacies and skills. The participants also emphasize a lack of experience and exposure to the international world of libraries outside the country.

The participants from all groups viewed the lack of competences of library staff through their own qualification and experience. Several of the staff remaining after downsizing, who were to deal with the complexities of making the unified library working in the context of the merger, appeared to have insufficient or inappropriate competencies. For some of the library staff, the problem is about qualification in librarianship, to others it is about working experience. However, there are also those who fall into both categories.

*In our library, we get inexperienced students who come directly from secondary schools who do not know how to search for information in library and library materials. In addition, I personally face challenges related to qualification and competencies inherent to the profession since I myself am not trained in librarianship. However, I get support from qualified colleagues in order to help the users (LS).*

The emphasis in this excerpt is on service perspectives, mainly regarding lack of qualification and experience in librarianship as an obstacle for providing reasonable services to users who cannot make sufficient use of the library on their own, without assistance. The library staff confess to a lack of experience and qualification while at the same time they are mentoring and serving even more inexperienced users who need professional help. In most cases, library staff need more skills to help users. It should also be highlighted that the person who speaks through the above quotation mentions that support is provided by qualified colleagues. This example shows how groups of staff are part of local, workplace-based communities of practice where knowledge and skills can be seen as distributed among peers. More formal, planned learning occasions are perceived by many of the library staff as something which happens rarely. Frequently, unskilled library staff thus recognize not having sufficient provisions of various kinds.
I, myself recognize to be lacking some skills and again I get a limited number of trainings. For instance, I once got a training opportunity two years ago when I was in my former workplace (LS).

Relying almost solely on skills and knowledge development taking place through informal social interaction and peer learning in workplaces becomes particularly difficult in the light of staff being relocated, often at short notice. The lacking skills can vary from one person to another and between libraries. However, the presence of unskilled staff is noted in most of the libraries. Library managers also recognize skill gaps among library staff.

Some staff lack skills about computerization, [...] some staff still need to upgrade their degree; some have language barriers, some still speak only French and Kinyarwanda while English is the only medium of teaching within the university (LM).

The low level of literacies mentioned here is a potential constraint to the activities related to user education (information literacy and reference services) in general and to research support in particular. For instance, it is difficult for some library staff to facilitate and support information search in library collections (printed and databases) and provide support to researchers whose research activities are accomplished using English language.

An additional concern is that of library staff lacking experience and exposure to other libraries.

I have never had a chance to visit any library either within the country nor abroad but some libraries are inspiring from looking at their website... the way information was displayed was just inspiring me, and how you can access to e-resources that they have subscribed to (LS).

It is difficult to supply advanced library services if there has been no opportunity to benchmark with some kind of ideal practices. Certainly, the statement above signals an interest in seeing how library work is conducted in places considered state of the art within academic librarianship.
I have not visited any library anywhere for benchmarking outside our country; I do have no any other picture of a library, which can inspire me. I just see them online but I have not gone there physically (LS).

Here is a recognition that learning about advanced library practices is not only a matter of reading about such or looking at images. For professional proficiency, there is a need to be on site and observe practices firsthand. In addition to the previously mentioned workplace-located distribution of skills and knowledge, according to which library work at least partly is viewed as a situated sociocultural practice, library staff need to actually experience places and take part of what is going on in these sites. If they are not allowed specific funds to visit well-functioning, well-equipped libraries in other countries, it becomes very difficult for them to be progressive and formulate appropriate goals of development. However, library staff appear to not have had a chance to visit other libraries even within the merged institutions.

The library of former [institution] is the most inspiring; I heard that it is well equipped. Unfortunately, I have not been there. I am curious about it, and I would wish to visit it. I also heard of its branch situated in [N...] campus (LS).

Even when there are inspiring examples within the merged libraries, there has been no process in place to allow librarians to visit and draw from in-house experiences. All the above three quotations convey a lack of exposure to other libraries as a hinder to capacity building and self-confidence. The lack of access to well-functioning examples is striking in this case where the libraries are supposed to raise from a level of technical and professional institution (serving mainly undergraduates) to a university level with higher expectations in research. It is fundamental that librarians need to visit well-functioning libraries and learn from them in order to develop appropriate skills responding to the university profile and ambition. The senior managers also recognize the lack of competencies and skills among library staff.

[S]ome of the library staff, they may not even have the skills of ...you know... helping you in locating the book or journals that you are looking for. Most of them I use to feel that they really need some good training so that they improve their skills and that help the students as well as the faculty in providing the necessary services (SM).
In the above excerpt, the senior manager recognizes the lack of skills among library staff and expects them to be skilled in order to provide good quality services to library users. This expectation of the senior manager is likely to stem from his or her situated understanding of what a library is supposed to be about; a view that is coloured by the idealized view of the modern library transpiring from the vision documents. The shift from a traditional library to a modern one necessitates upgrading competencies of staff to the new meaning attached to libraries and to the expected performance of those working there. In other words, this means adapting the old tools to the new context, which in this case include building the capacity of library staff with new competencies, skills and literacies in connection to the requirements of digitized libraries. Otherwise, such imbalance implies the meaning of a modern university library to be illusive. This imbalance as noted in this section leads to questions and deliberations regarding the efforts engaged in by senior management in strengthening libraries. This is elaborated further on in this chapter, in connection to decision-making, the sense of responsibility and capacity of senior managers at different hierarchical levels when it comes to improving the situation of the staff they manage.

In addition to statements concerning the quality and competences of library staff, the empirical data provide different views on expected educational qualifications of librarians. In the following two statements from senior managers, one refers to Ph.D. holders librarians, while the other refers to master’s degree holders.

*We do not have the right people to occupy posts so we have to do a lot of capacity building... we need Ph.D. holders in the library to occupy posts but we do not have any...we are obliged to hire people from neighboring countries and so on...which might be expensive to the university (SM).*

This reflects high expectations from managers as regard to competencies and qualification of library staff. The emphasis here is on the academic label of library staff, which is connected to research and publications activities. This is an expectation that goes beyond the capacity of not only the University of Rwanda but also the country. As of the time of writing this thesis there is no Ph.D. degree holder in LIS who is native to Rwanda. Furthermore, as it was earlier on explained in the background chapter, there is no academic department or school of LIS in Rwanda, which can contribute to such achievement. However,
Despite this national context of LIS the expectations are still high but vary somewhat among senior managers.

_We want a good proportional of library staff, majority to have a master’s degree in library science and maybe a few to have Ph.Ds. (SM)._}

The above excerpts show diverging views in relation to academic qualifications. Considering the practice at international level (e.g. USA and Sweden), it is not so common to have Ph.D. holders as librarians. They might be suitable for managerial positions in libraries rather than being librarians. What is expressed in the excerpts reflects an overestimation of the current local context as regards librarianship. I will discuss this issue in connection to the idealized image of libraries further on in this chapter and in connection to solutions in Chapter 9.

While some opt for highly educated people, others emphasize competent and skilled staff. The following account underscores competences over educational degrees.

_To be honest with you, when people are obsessed with degrees, you know... you know I have a master’s degree... I have a Ph.D. degree I have this and that..., for me I do not care about that, those do not matter, what matters is what you do with what, and what you are aiming to have, so what matters is competence (SM)._}

This statement is a reaction to a culture that tends to measure competencies through academic degrees. It is also a criticism of the idea that academic degrees adequately reflect competencies. According to the experiences of this manager, degrees are sometimes not the best measurement. At the same time, the degree should also reflect an advanced form of training adequate for professional work in a certain area. Librarianship is such an area where there is a clear need for highly trained professionals.

In addition to qualifications of library staff, there was also issues related to the number of employees. In most of the libraries, – if not all – both groups of participants, managers and library staff considered the number of staff to be insufficient compared to the number of users and their needs and also to the services that the libraries are supposed to provide.
We do not have staff and I always say we are understaffed, we are understaffed ... you can’t work without people, no, no! (SM).

The lack of staff affects the library services in various ways and may vary between libraries. One clear example is that a lack of staff manifests itself in what kind of opening hours are possible. In line with this assertion, one can view a sufficient number of appropriately trained and competent staff as a means that mediate library services of high quality. The next account concerns problems with insufficient staffing of library services in general and to the working hours in particular.

I want the library to be open during evening hours like until 9 pm at least. Actually, they close at five, yeah! In addition, during lunchtime, it is closed, and you know that is not a good idea, you know that is when students are free to read at the library... but I cannot blame them; they are only three people... It has always been like that, in most cases it has been like that (SM).

This quotation reflects that the scarcity of staff challenges library work and that such a situation has consequences for the library users who do not have timely access to the library services. The excerpt is representative of other examples (often appearing in the interview transcripts) of the libraries that were not able to deliver services. In general, a lack of resources in the form of an appropriate number of qualified staff was noted in several libraries. In most cases, there was a combination of lacking resources whether equipment, information resources, and human resources. It did not become possible to perform a multitude of activities in the context of understaffing, and hence library staff frequently chose to concentrate only on some of the routine activities. They also explained that they had left aside other activities and locked out some sections – though important – that required certain conditions and circumstances like availability of materials and sufficient opening hours. For instance, in some libraries, due to a lack of enough staff, there was a suppression of reference services whilst in some others, activities like classification and cataloguing were not done regularly, which is manifested in the following quote.

My responsibility consisted of doing cataloguing and classification but since the merger where I currently work alone, I am alone to do everything in this library. Consequently, I have no time to accomplish those activities; but rather I focus only on circulation of information materials (LS).
A consequence of understaffing is that the remaining professionals must plan their work carefully, giving priority to some tasks and putting others aside. Without a uniform set of principles for all libraries, decisions on what is to be given priority tend to be made in isolation, locally at the different libraries. In extension, this may with time lead to practices becoming more disparate.

*There are many services in the library, but reference service is always or most of the time ignored. This service might be a separate one to the circulation desk, which we mixed up quite often due to lack of staff (LS).*

Without the necessary staffing, different services, which should be held apart, can be collapsed into each other. Again, such decisions are local in character. At one library a practice may develop in which reference services and circulation desk tasks are collapsed into each other while at other libraries they remain apart. As the library staff points out in the above account, the scarcity of resources is a challenge to both work activities and library services. There is an imbalance between understandings of the necessary provisions for library work, and the services that libraries can offer, and the expectations from the users. The reasonable explanation for this outcome is the disconnect problem, which in this case manifests itself through the distance between on the one hand insufficient staffing of the libraries and, on the other hand, the high expectations expressed, for example, in the vision documents concerning the modern library. I will have reasons to return to this problem in the discussion chapter.

### 8.4 Scarcity of library facilities and collections

The librarians work in order to meet the information needs of users. For doing this, they need library equipment as well as the necessary materials. For academic libraries it is vital that all such resources are state-of-the-art and updated. The participants from both groups talked about challenges related to scarcity of facilities such as buildings, space and library collections with reference to the activities discussed in Chapter 7. The scarcity of various resources was seen as hindering the achievement of activities at different libraries.

*About books, our library is more special...books are insufficient; I can say that there is no budget provision provided for collection*
development. So, the institute or the college as we talk now depends entirely on gifts and donations of resources of which at this time are not relevant to the subjects that the university teaches (LS).

The inadequacy of library collections is not only a challenge to library services, but also to teaching activities at local libraries. However, considering the context of the merger with the presence of students and users of the same college in different locations, the scarcity of a matching collection at a particular library has impact on other libraries as well. According to the participants, the scarcity of materials at a campus library affects not only service delivery within that campus but also constrains resource sharing with other libraries. As in the following account, the library manager emphasizes the scarcity of the library collection as a hinder to resource sharing within campuses.

Last time when teachers from our new campus in [...] requested books, I only sent some copies because I only had few and they were also needed by users at my own campus [furthermore] it was not easy to send them due to the distance and transportation facilities (LM).

In different settings, libraries face various sorts of scarcity and challenges. In addition to the geographical distance between campuses, the scarcity of books and inconsistencies in terms of circulation and transport of books within campuses complicate library services. The library staff sees that the geographical distance interposes as a challenge in addition to the scarcity of resources. Perceptions of distance constrains the staff at the main campus when sharing multiple click resources with the branch library at another campus.

In other settings, the lack of space in libraries involves challenges beyond ICT equipment, also constraining services to users.

Personally, here I have some problems about building facilities like space: we have a small computer lab and few computers while students are many (LS).

This reflects that the potentials for the library to support learning and research activities are reduced. The library space is important in both computerized and non-computerized libraries to facilitate users’ interaction either among them, with library collections or both. Library
space stands for many functions to various users. In most libraries, space was seen to be insufficient. In the following account, a member of management emphasizes the need for reading rooms and space for meetings that are well-equipped with ICTs and qualified librarians.

... *I think creating reading rooms like a big hall which is called a reading room [...] we need a big area, a big space with IT access, computers and laptops, subject librarians at hand that can talk to people and help people* ... (SM).

The account describes scarcity of a range of resources. It also expresses the desire to have enough resources and a positive impact. What is communicated here is the need for enough resources that match the needs of libraries and their users. Drawing on a sociocultural perspective, which highlights situatedness and context dependency, the manager’s concern about professional librarians comes through in the expressed need that the librarians must be matched to the specific subjects studied and researched at the respective campuses.

The accounts in this section reflect that the UR libraries appear to uphold different problems of resources including lack of library collections and facilities. What is echoed here is a mismatch between library collections, space, staff and library users. Whilst the aspiration to becoming a modern library requires appropriate facilities and professionals in order to meet the expectations and needs of users, the above statements illustrate the opposite. This is again another manifestation of the disconnect problem between the visionary rhetoric and the practices at libraries. The scarcity of resources constitutes a major challenge to library work in general and to resource sharing in particular. Even if scarcity was there before the merger, it has become striking within the merger due to reasons including the geographical context, the merger itself as a process and the historical background of the merged intuitions. This is discussed further in Chapter 10.

Besides the aspects of scarcity, there are also disproportion of resources in the merged institutions that affect the practice of resource sharing, which is the issue addressed in the following section.
8.5 Asymmetry and connectedness of resources at libraries

While the previous section dealt with scarcity of resources, this section presents differences of resources among libraries while also highlighting the interdependency between these resources for the achievement of library services in the merger. Problems involving asymmetry of materials might have been long-standing before the merger, but they become very visible and acute in connection with the merger process. Most of these problems are inherently linked to changes in the working environment, to a variety of services, and to various types of library users. The disparity of resources per se would not necessarily be a problem. However, in the setting of the UR where the libraries are located in various places in the country and urged to offer the same services to various users, such disparity appears to hinder collaboration and harmonization of services.

According to the participants, these differences affect more or less the quality of service to users but also the practices at libraries. Asymmetry was observed in almost all types of resources (human and objects) concerned in this thesis. In relation to the sharing of electronic resources, disparities in ICT equipment were seen as presenting a major challenge, especially in the context where libraries have to work as one unit. Sufficient ICT, for example, clearly stands out as a mediational mean in a library that aspires to deliver digital library services. For the participants, it was difficult to share resources while operating in disparate conditions.

 [...] our libraries need to be at the same level, which is still a challenge: some libraries are computerized others not, among those computerized some use open sources others pay for annual subscription; we are working at different standards. Therefore, we need to harmonize and have one common catalogue showing different locations of resources (LM).

Providing the same services at various libraries necessitates a common or compatible LMS. The lack of such an important tool can lead to substantial problems to library services and to the achievement of a united library unit. For those who have no computers at all or a limited amount of such, the goal is to become computerized. However, that does not mean that they have Internet connectivity, which is a
fundamental necessity. Still, for those that have Internet connectivity, they have a further need of having the necessary bandwidth and reliable Internet connection. In the empirical data, some librarians therefore talked about the need to become computerized while others talked about the need for appropriate Internet connectivity.

With regard to these kinds of statements, during the data production I noticed dichotomies in the circulation systems and in the different ways in which users’ identities are managed. As illustrated in figure 11, the collection of photos (from field observations) of different types of users’ identification documents from libraries, there were problems linked to the lack of harmonized user’s identification documents.

Figure 11: Collection of users’ identification documents

Figure 11 illustrates three types of documents that users could present at libraries in order to get services including borrowing items from the library. To the left (upper and bottom side), there is a library user card from one of the libraries. This is typical for this particular library. I have been told that this was used before the merger. To the right, from bottom-up are respectively a student card and a national ID card. All
the cards were allowed but with restrictions. A user within his/her college/campus could use one of these cards to borrow library materials according to library circulation rules. However, in another college or campus, a user could only be allowed a short loan, i.e. to use library materials inside the library and nothing more. The participants faced various problems linked to these disparities of user’s identification cards. The main issue that was reported by library staff and that was supported by my observations was about the tracking of users and library materials once borrowed. The difficulties vary from computerized to non-computerized libraries.

*With a manual system we use for circulation, it is not easy to track a book when you do not find it on shelves. We cannot know whether it is on loan and identify the borrower or if it is lost (LS).*

The problem here is that the UR libraries lack a common, unified LMS, which makes it possible to keep track of users and items in the library collection. The lack of such an important tool undermines services in libraries for both staff and users. During data production, at some of the libraries, there were bunches of cards (of either sort) left by the users who borrowed items from libraries for years or months. The staff at these libraries voiced skeptic views as to having the items returned by the cards’ holders. The library staff recognized the disparity of user’s identification documents as a major constraint to the circulation of library items, but also to users who could not get services as they wanted. This is actually an issue of leaking materials from libraries due to poor user’s identity management system. This arrangement has served to further create asymmetries among libraries.

In connection to the asymmetry of resources, several participants in all subgroups regarded resources as being interdependent if resource sharing is to happen. However, some of the resources were given primacy over others. For instance, in the following account, the primacy is given to people rather than to objects but with a conditional link between the two types of resources.

*We act on infrastructure but the key problem is the staff; we really need qualified librarians who are experienced and who can mentor/train others […] there is a need to have the same skills on using software if we are to use the same (LM).*
Not only people but also specific competencies are noted as important for the library staff to interact with equipment. This amalgamation of materials, people and competencies is a cornerstone for sharing resources. In similar cases connectedness and interdependency between materials is as important as evidenced in the following excerpt.

*Even if we had enough resources to share, and our catalogs accessible online [...] we see that the Internet connection is down all the time. There are also campuses that are not connected to Internet, where users can’t access to resources available in other campuses or colleges (LM).*

The achievement of sharing online resources requires consistent and interdependent materials within a certain context. It is not enough to have one or another type of resources, the interconnectedness between them matters.

Overall, asymmetries as observed in this section appear to be connected to a transition from a traditional analog library to a modern digital library and from isolated libraries to a united university library formation. The move from a traditional analog library to a modern digital library must indeed involve changes. According to both groups of participants, these changes would require more effort (than what is being put in) in order to achieve the aspirations. Consequently, considering both the talk about the libraries and the practices at these, the results reveal some discrepancies between the ideals and practices at libraries.

### 8.6 Idealized and normative images of the library

In this section, participants’ accounts are presented and discussed in relation to the difficulty to achieve an ‘ideal or a modern library’. In order to emphasize their concern and expectations about the UR libraries, participants used examples from the libraries that they had visited in the East African region and other countries worldwide. The main aspects of comparison included library collections, space, infrastructure, and staff profiles and promotions. The points of reference were enough space for reading and discussions, LMS to access information resources from wherever in the world, and interlibrary loan to complete the university’s collection whenever
needed. The professional qualification of library staff was also part of the priorities.

"For me a modern library is quality of services, equipment, professional librarians, and information materials. I did my masters in... [name of a country], at my university, the library was so fantastic: good delivery services and off-campus services. You would access the collection online, and if you could not manage to find an article or e-book, you could ask the library to purchase it for you; and they would send it to you in short time, just in hours. In addition, you know... 24 hours self-service, you know, you go there you borrow a book you do not need to register what; just everything is on your student card (SM)."

I previously discussed librarians having difficulty envisioning what kind of work practices a modern library would imply. This can be compared with the above statement, coming from a manager who has studied at a University with a very well-functioning academic library. In this excerpt, the participant highlights what a library needs in order to fulfill its mission. These requirements range from connection of the university to the community through quality of services that are enabled by suitable equipment and professional staff. This assertion is grounded in the participant’s idea that a library is not only the space or information materials or staff, but, rather an interconnected combination of various things and actors.

With reference to the characteristics of modern libraries as described above, several participants from both groups noted low credit paid to the UR libraries and lack of necessities such as equipment and enough staff as challenges.

"They [referring to a visited library abroad] have a big space, discussion rooms for students, they have computers for users but us here we have one computer for staff use only (LS)."

From the experience of this library staff, a modern library has to be a well-equipped place that offers a conducive working environment for both users and library staff. This reflects the necessity for a combination of various resources in terms of space, ICTs and facilities such as reading rooms.
I would wish to have or work in a library equipped with an integrated library system, security system (for detection of possible thief/cheating), qualified and enough staff to occupy all positions, enough space for office work according to different services in library and for users, and materials and equipment (LS).

There are obviously advantages connected to a well-equipped and well-functioning modern library that meets international standards. As professionals, library staff would wish for a modern library as a workplace where they could perform in line with their competences and skills while a lack of such infrastructure is another way of keeping their knowhow unexploited. In this sense, a suitably equipped, up-to-date library is perceived, by many of the staff, as a mediational mean for the development of their professional expertise; a mediational mean that is for most of the staff missing. Modern libraries are thus workplaces that could contribute to the improvement of competences of library staff, the construction of librarians’ identity and recognition of the central role of libraries within the UR’s core mission of teaching, learning and research.

Participants from both groups recognize the important role of the library in a university.

*The library is the heart of a university that provides services to academics and students in their learning, teaching and research activities, and literature review (LM).*

From the perspective of this library manager, the library serves different users within the university community to meet various needs. Providing a variety of services implies that libraries would need a range of resources to be able to achieve their mission.

*... for the university, a library is the heart! You can’t teach, you can’t study without resources (SM).*

It appears to this senior manager that unequipped libraries constrain educational activities in a university. This assertion that the library plays a central role could be taken as an argument for providing it with enough resources. However, following the ideas of economy of scale, according to which one can do more with less, one can also imagine that the totality of resources may actually shrink in the context of the
merger. This seems to be the consequence for the UR libraries, but most of the participants who see the libraries to play a major role in the university do not appreciate this idea of shrinking resources.

*The academic library is as critical as information and knowledge, teaching us to do literature reviews, helping us to perform memory aid, helping us to review papers to critically appraise papers, to implement evidence-based practices, helping us to do systematic reviews, guiding us on how to…I mean a huge amount of things. Then it has nothing to do with putting books on shelves (SM).*

It stands clear from the above quotations that the library plays a broader role than merely providing books to users. In these excerpts, the emphasis is on the idealized role and position of an academic library. The reoccurring use of the metaphor “the heart” appears as a typical figure for emphasizing, on a rhetorical level, the importance of the library in a university. However, participants in both groups expressed the need for improvement in order to reach a modern library that is able to fulfill such a mission. However, it is possible to see contradictions among the participants regarding their view on the library. Not all of them are subscribing to this rhetoric where the library is the “heart of the university”. These different views appear as a manifestation of the disconnect problem between the narratives and practices. The library based participants and some of the group of senior management articulated their indignation concerning the low credit that the management seemed to attribute to libraries even though they expected them to be modern and contribute to the development of the university. Most concerns were about decision-making and inherent consequences but also prejudices about libraries and librarians. The following quote echoes contradicting views about how the management attend to library matters.

*No, we never discuss libraries; the senior management meetings never discuss libraries (SM).*

This statement reflects that in practice things are done differently compared to the previous rhetoric emphasizing the library as playing an important role. Library issues appear to be overlooked when it comes to decision making. There are obviously consequences linked to such practices from the side of the management. However, some of the
managers appear to oppose such decisions as evidenced in the following quote.

You can’t call something a heart, then you do not resource it accordingly! (SM).

This reaction of a senior manager reflects a disappointment as regard to the disconnect problem between the rhetoric about libraries and the practices related to library development, the decisions that need to be taken and the resources that need to be provided. The disappointment emanates from the conflict between the rhetoric and practices regarding decisions about and treatment of libraries. There are contradictions between the rhetoric and practicalities around libraries on the one hand, and what is expected from libraries on the other hand. In the latter excerpt, the manager is criticizing that the libraries are not given sufficient resources while they are expected to play a central role in the university and work efficiently. Senior managers simply put less effort in decision-making concerning libraries compared to the high expectations they have on them. This is an understanding of libraries as ‘peripheral’, which does not attract the attention of the management. Nevertheless, libraries suffer financially from not being included in the decision-making structure.

Even if the view of libraries as peripheral may interfere with professional development and the idea of the modern university, several participants in this study acknowledged that such an attitude was widespread among decision-makers in the senior management group. The following excerpt is a response to the question of whether the participant uses the UR libraries and how he/she satisfies the needs in information.

I use databases through the internet on my laptop. If you mean the UR physical library, no, I do not use because the library really has only books, they have some small desktops that the students can search from (SM).

This shows that at least some members of the management are familiar with the state the libraries are in. Instead of doing what is in the management’s capacity to undermine the poor quality of the collections and equipment in the libraries, an alternative solution is to use their own means to satisfy the needs of information. The ideal would be to instead
empower the library for the sake of all users. Otherwise, it is hard to imagine a modern university without access to international journals.

The views of the participants (including library staff) about librarians circled around their role, attitudes, and commitment to make libraries contribute to the university’s mission. The participants from both groups expected librarians to be key players in helping the university achieve its mission. Consequently, in order to meet these expectations most participants placed at the forefront the educational qualifications of library staff and their identity within the UR as a whole rather than within a particular campus library.

There is a need for professional librarians who know more than just providing library services... who are competent for academic reading and writing, and who can help my students to read and teach them how to read (SM).

This statement points at an image of a librarian as a teacher who is able to compensate for inadequacies in other parts of the educational system. What a manager is communicating here reflects, once again, high expectations on librarians, who have to be skilled enough to take part in academic work. The expectations are high but vary among the participants depending on context and their views of librarians in a university.

Librarians who are skilled in scientific reading but also able to continue doing research, generating new knowledge to improve skills..., ... to be up-to-date on how to support researchers and mostly Ph.D. students as we are planning to start more and more Ph.D. programs (SM).

The view emerging in this quotation is of librarians upholding a double role of not only supporting researchers but also as professionals who take part in research activities. This statement emphasizes what is believed to be the professional skills required for librarians in order to support users in general and researchers in particular. However, compared to the previous quotation the two different views of a librarian are not necessarily common in all universities and countries worldwide as discussed further on in the discussion chapter. In connection to the aspiration of the university to become an internationally recognized actor, there is a need for librarians to also
upgrade their skills and build their confidence but also consider
themselves as part of such a large institution.

However, participants from all the subgroups mentioned the lack of an
educational program in librarianship as a major challenge to the
understanding of library related issues and librarianship.

*I consider the lack of teaching program in librarianship in
Rwanda to be a barrier to the development of libraries and the
understanding of librarianship as a profession. There is no
academic program to train librarians. Moreover, those who
graduate from universities abroad do not get a fair salary. They
get demotivated and prefer to work in other domains than in the
library field (LS).*

This reflects that the lack of necessary resources in the Rwandan
context in terms of an academic program for future librarians has
consequences on the profession. There is a risk of contributing to the
underestimation of librarians and librarianship as a profession within
the university when the staff is not perceived as a valuable contribution
to the work force.

*So far, people with master’s degrees in librarianship throughout
the whole country are about thirty, that is a very small number
indeed, only one is on Ph.D. studies, it is you…so you know the
challenges but think…we should not stop to ensure that we are
going to be involving them (SM).*

This senior manager recognizes that the lack of trained librarians is a
crucial problem that entails consequences for the university. The
national context of librarianship plays a major role in the
understandings of the role of libraries and librarians and librarianship
as a profession. These understandings inform promotion and motivation
of library staff.

### 8.7 Lack of promotion and motivation

The librarians talked about the lack of a promotion scheme and fair
treatment, which demotivate them in their professional endeavors. They
regard their situation as leading to a state of dissatisfaction and
disappointment, and their expectations throughout the merger has
shifted from high in the beginning of the merger process to low where they are now in this process. Contrary to the fair treatment they were expecting from being part of a larger university, and being more visible as professionals, they now experience a situation that many of them experience as hopeless. As in the following excerpt, the library staff talks about her/his experience when coming back from studies:

*You know... there is a problem related to motivation, there is... for now we are not academic staff, since we are not academic, we have horizontal promotion but not vertical promotion. So it is very frustrating for us just go to study, when you come back, there is nothing they can add on your salary. Only they give you a lot of work to perform but nothing about the salary. This is frustrating of course, and it also has an impact on how we librarians achieve our goals (LS).*

In the account above the participant highlights a gap in recognition of the library staff’s achievements. The starting point is the comparison with academic staff who have promotion opportunities right away after studies or after achieving a certain level of requirements. As a response to such frustration, library staff prefer to go for safe activities or in most cases, they just keep quiet.

*I hope that when the structure comes in place, those who have qualifications and have the requirements to be promoted from one level to another will be promoted. That would help the library and the librarians to have a vision, to have a focus in their work so that as we struggle to move from one level to another we shall be delivering the best that we can, otherwise I do not see any encouragement (LS).*

In this quotation, discontentment is expressed. The library staff points at a lack of recognition, whereby the value involved in the work and effort of librarians are not recognized. This lack of recognition of librarians can be linked to the aspect of seeing a library as peripheral and not as a central unit to a university as mentioned in a previous section. The two ways of promotion, i.e. vertical and horizontal, which are applied at the UR, are one of the main idiosyncrasies of academic and administrative staff. While academics get promoted from one grade to another (vertical promotion) by educational level and/or publications, the administrative staff, which includes library staff, can only move within the same grade (horizontal) with a slight raise of salary.
depending on years of experience and performance but regardless of the increase of educational qualification. These differences stimulate librarians to struggle for academic status, which also infers pros and cons as earlier discussed, but are meaningful for librarians once alleviated. However, library staff still keep moving forward hoping to get a better situation in the future, as many participants noted.

We report all the challenges we face, but we do not get answers right away but we hope that one day they will be addressed. This does not stop us to work though not well motivated. Once our questions are solved, we hope to be more efficient (LS).

This quotation echoes that the distance between libraries and the senior management has an impact on everyday activities in libraries. Not being perceived by management and others as a representative for a profession, i.e. librarianship, but instead as someone enacting a non-profession evokes negative feelings among the library staff, which they express in a strong vocabulary. They talk about being discouraged, frustrated, demotivated, but they are still working and hoping for the best. In their work, library staff would like to improve their services as well as their professional knowledge, but, as highlighted throughout this chapter, they face a range of different challenges. Furthermore, the routines in the university organization for communicating complaints or reporting matters that cause dissatisfaction (if such routines exist at all) are most often dysfunctional. The lack (or non-existence) of routines for this purpose, which can be seen as related to matters of leadership and power relations, is probably contributing to cement the gap between library practices and the rhetoric around libraries.

8.8 Problems of leadership as a centralized command-and-control tool

It was mentioned at the outset of this chapter that centralizing decision making within one university unit could be seen as an opportunity for management to achieve numerous goals. However, such a centralization is likely to entail problems for those units of the university that for various reasons are regarded by decision-makers as peripheral, for example the libraries. Participants from both groups noted aspects connected to this centralization. They expressed difficulties linked to the centralization of decision making to the university headquarters. The main issues indicated in most accounts is
about routines and procedures for decision-making and how this centralization affects activities at various colleges and campus libraries.

We have many issues related to the management style, but procedures..., thinking that being in one university is to concentrate everything at headquarter, for me I would like decentralization again, of course being one university but giving powers to colleges (SM).

This senior manager highlights a dimension of disempowerment of the colleges, which is due to the concentration of decision-making power to the headquarters. This can hamper activities and initiatives at the colleges and campuses, which affects the libraries. The centralization of powers in order to control may not be appropriate in the setting of geographically dispersed libraries and colleges or campuses.

Decentralization is better than centralization. Library plans were previously endorsed by the authority at campus level, but I am not sure if it is the same at headquarters where they do not even know the in-country realities (LM).

This statement points to the distance between the university management and libraries. It furthermore underscores the situatedness of decision-making. In order to make decisions in line with how library work is enacted in practice, the decision-makers need to know the context in which the library and its staff operate. At the same time as libraries are cherished in visions and rhetoric, they become reduced and hampered in practice. The geographical distance presents challenges to library activities that are situated in and inseparable from their respective locations. What the library manager in the excerpt above points to, is a need for a decentralized leadership that can reestablish proximity and collaboration between libraries and management at local sites. This would require the management to pay attention to practices that are rooted and situated in the contexts of the UR libraries.

[...] everything is centralized in Kigali: decisions and procurement issues. This is a big handicap for the achievement of our duties because we can wait for two or three months while before the merger it was possible even in one or three days or weeks (LM).
This library manager asserts that the centralized leadership within the merger has disrupted practices of localized, formal and informal decision-making at libraries. Such disruption appears to have created a gap in working routines at libraries, which hampers or delays activities. In the two previous accounts, the library manager and the senior manager highlight different problems linked to power centralization as regard to practices situated at libraries. They also emphasize aspects of geographical location with regard to the headquarters. However, the main issue might not be the actual location, but the main drawbacks might rather reside in the communication pattern and the organizational structure, linked to the merger process that is not yet stabilized. Some of the library managers expressed feelings of hopelessness about changes in distribution of power and decision-making ability.

Many activities related to resource sharing require budgetary allocation for implementation. Therefore, the budget may delay the process because decisions makers do not consider library activities as a priority. Moreover, we, the directors, there is nothing we can do to push those decision makers. Budget include many aspects such as transport, recruitment of staff, and support for training (LM).

The centralized leadership does not only lead to disempowerment of library managers but also largely affects how work in the libraries is conducted. Despite the geographical distance between libraries and the university management, the latter was seen by library managers to interfere in the management of libraries.

The form of communication is problematic ... see, for example they appointed a staff here at my unit without informing me, and the staff did not show up...later the staff was detached again in the same way; this is not fair... I am managing this unit; I have to be informed about all things, which are going on in my unit, which is not the case in this merger. I do not know, the communication is not quite well (LM).

From the above accounts, the lack of communication and the centralized managerial structure are seen as key hinders of the progress of the situations in some — if not all — campus libraries. The two statements reveal a pessimistic state of mind of library managers regarding power relations and collaboration between senior management and library units. The aspect of centralization of decision-
making was also seen as hampering the processes of acquisition of materials and suitable library equipment. In the following, a senior manager expresses worries concerning the centralized leadership.

Difficulties might come in the future and this tendency to centralize many things, many services, or if decision making powers are not re-decentralized again my worry is that...is going to take a long time to get some services and materials (SM).

The staff at colleges or campus appear to not have any power to decide for themselves concerning the libraries that they work in. They are only to implement decisions from the senior management where in most cases they have to wait for long time for decisions to be taken. Such a long decision-making process serves to increase the uncertainty of the staff at libraries.

In the uncertainty of the merger, some people might have had difficulties to fit in or to accommodate changes. Participants ventilated their concerns about the attitudes of library staff of which some appeared to be resistant to changes.

...we have to change people’s attitudes because I think some people are still in the mode of... ‘oh I am working for this campus library and nothing else matters ’... (SM).

This account can be seen as a sign of the manager wishing staff to be loyal to the merger project and the newly formed university. It can also be said that some of the library staff have not yet been integrated within the UR. They would like to but do not see themselves as part of the UR yet as expressed in the following excerpt:

I only had an appointment letter and we had a meeting with the... [one of the senior managers], once our complaints are answered, I will know that I am part of the UR, but nothing else! (LS).

The two statements emphasize a lack of integration in two contrasting perspectives, one from the perspective of a senior manager and another from a library staff. It is as if the merger was launched with a somewhat naïve view of what it takes to mobilize staff from different organizations into a new unified organization. Existing communities of practice at the dispersed libraries were not taken into consideration, nor
was attention paid to work being an activity that is characterized by situated practices and local routines through which employees to a great extent learn to do their jobs. When the only sign of a new work appointment is a formal letter – without any further information and introduction to the new job – it is hardly surprising that problems pertaining to loyalty occurs. However, both librarians and library managers seem to be striving towards the same goal, but still, things do not work out.

8.8.1 Hierarchies, decision-making and disempowerment of libraries

In the current section, the focus is on how the participants consider hierarchical relations to constrain most of their initiatives and how they try to overcome, handle and or navigate the situation. Given the situation of the new organization working with old and often time no longer relevant policy guidelines, people express feelings of alienation or disempowerment. Participants from both groups highlighted the role hierarchies and decision-making play in the accomplishment of their activities.

Oh! What plan! I cannot plan anything without me being the boss! No, that is not possible! We do not plan, we do not! We are subordinates! We can do nothing! (LS).

This library staff articulates a feeling of subordination to a nonfunctioning hierarchical system. Actors at library level consider actors at managerial level to be higher in hierarchy, but also as disinterested and disconnected higher authorities. Consequently, distance library activities become unnecessary delayed when waiting to implement directives from decision-makers. This subordinate position of waiting inhibit staff initiatives regarding their working environment and slowing down progress of activities. Some participants also expressed that senior managers sometimes are misinformed about the role and practices of libraries, which might have lead them to take biased decisions against libraries.

Some of our leaders do not really understand the role of a library in teaching and research at the university. This is a major challenge when it comes to request for some materials and equipment, it may take a bit of time to convince the boss before
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s/he provides you with what you want. In the meanwhile, your plan or some of the activities may delay (LS).

This library staff establish that management sometimes do not fully grasp the potential role of libraries, which in extension may influence the decisions about libraries. These decisions may not only affect allocation of materials and equipment, but also lead to libraries and librarians being disempowered. The competences embedded in libraries in terms of resource sharing have so far been limited because each library was still acting on its own, applying its own library policy and/or rules and regulations dating from before the merger.

Among the library policies collected as empirical data, few allowed interlibrary loans. The libraries that are forced into the merger are being decontextualized and acting on something that is no longer situated in the context where they are supposed to function. A locally grounded and contextually informed plan containing a strategy for how to conduct the work in the library is simply missing. Such a plan would have constituted an important mediational means, but is now, since the merger, replaced by a short and generic mission and vision statement. A prominent strand in the empirical data highlights that this affects the performance of the library staff and the services delivered. There is on the one hand constraints for professionals to work and plan freely and on the other hand there is the burden of always waiting for guidance from people who do not know or who are misinformed about library work. And, who, in addition, might not be interested in making decisions about libraries at all as enounced earlier in this chapter; that the senior managers do not discuss library issues.

Though we are not decision makers, we had a meeting as [...] to see how we can share resources and initiate interlibrary loan or other things, we are to report to [...] , so it is a long process as we have to wait for decision makers to decide what to do (LM).

The above account implies the impact of the decision making process on performance of activities in the libraries. It signals competence and a will but without mandate to act for library staff and managers. In other words, the library managers know what to do – i.e. they have the competence – but they sense that they cannot act before anyone else takes a decision. Activities therefore might be delayed or remain unfinished due to staff having to wait for authorization from decision-makers. However, in practice and in accordance with the above
accounts, things are being done albeit in a slow pace. This relates to the major issues involving relations and communication between the various actors in order to discuss library matters. It seems reasonable to claim that the insufficient funding of the libraries and the slow decision-making process contribute to maintain the image held by management concerning the library and library staff. This appears to be inadequate and not up to the mark. In short, one can refer to a process of mutual negative shaping.

Due to the size of the university, participants would appreciate seeing changes in the structure of decision-making. It could, for example, be a matter of shifting from a centralized leadership that controls and decides everything, to a distributed leadership with a system of delegation of power and decisions to colleges, campuses and/or units, including libraries. From the perspective of the participants from both groups, the decision makers (UR top managers) are seen as distant to the localized setting of practices in the sense that they seem not to be part of it. In the subsequent excerpt, a senior manager reasons along this line.

[S]o, we are not talking the same language but I am confident that each Principal knows really and is specialized in his college, so give him powers, accept his/her strategic and activity plans, even budget requests, […] but sometimes it is… we combine…, we share …we are ceiling budget, we are in ceiling every time(SM).

The senior manager here notes a distance that can justify how the UR management considers libraries and resource sharing. This sense of distance reflects a lack of a system of delegating power to decide what to do and how to do it at different locations. In such situation, Principals and Managers at colleges and campuses also appear to be disempowered as it has been noted earlier in this chapter in connection to the scarcity of human resources at libraries. I will elaborate further on this in the discussion chapter.

In the context of a centralized leadership, library staff recognize that their contribution in most cases is limited to providing advice – once an opportunity to speak out is offered to them. The centralization of decision making in order to control the ‘how and the what’ of libraries appeared to library staff to hamper the accomplishment of the work and the activities that are supposed to be going on in the libraries.
Consequently, the staff prefer to devote themselves to safe activities as a way to avoid possible issues with leadership and to avoid mistakes that can arise from not being aware of the plans for libraries.

*At my level, it is just ideas about what is needed but I think that the UR management has its plans about that because it involves budget (LS).*

This statement reflects that there are also those among the library staff that have trust in the people at the top of the hierarchy, that they know what they are doing and are aware of the potential consequences their actions can have for subsystems at the bottom of their organization. However, in such a large organization where the top management is occupied with strategic and managerial tasks, it might be difficult to link the two poles of the organization while operating in a centralized system.

From the perspective of sociocultural theory one can speak of the two cohorts – library staff and top management – acting in different and disconnected contexts, even though they, according to the overarching vision of the merger, are supposed to work in the same direction.

*Most of time what we need requires financial means, which is not in my capacity. Therefore, I do what is in my capacity and competence (LS).*

It appears that the library staff do not have a say about the resources that are necessary for their work, and whenever they have the opportunity to communicate their will, their influence is quite little and may not be taken into account by the decision makers. In the context of the merger, this reduction emerges in the form of an absence of a range of necessities, but concerning the matter of hierarchies and disempowerment, it is primarily a well-functioning system of delegation of power and decisions that is missing. There is no clear view of areas of responsibilities and of where decision-making power is positioned. In the following quotation where, for example, the library staff points at the issues of disempowerment connected to the centralization of decision-making power. Such centralization of leadership and decision-making undermines the library staff’s ability to influence the decisions on what is suitable for libraries.
If we get lucky, our leaders will provide what we suggest because myself, I cannot influence nor decide what to do, just suggest. It may even sometimes happen that I suggest and the management does not even know that what I am suggesting is needed. What we need involves different means in order to have a modern library that meets standards. We need budget and staff but I do not have any take on that, no influence, nothing else than suggesting because I do not have control on budget, only the management decides on what to avail (LS).

This, again, appears as a manifestation of the disconnect problem between the hierarchical levels, i.e. management and libraries. In other words, the above statement is a clear sign of disempowerment of libraries and librarians in terms of both communication and decision making at library level. With reference to the earlier quotation where a senior manager says that they (senior management) never discuss the library at the most important decision-making meetings, tensions and controversies appear here. On the one hand, librarians perceive that all decision-making are top-down. On the other hand, decisions on the library are not put on the table of centralized decision-making. This situation appears to add to the complexity in the management of libraries, and uncertainty among library staff who appear to be disempowered. The empirical data show that there are different ways in which library staff react to the challenges discussed in this section. These reactions are dealt with in the following section of the chapter.

### 8.8.2 Reactions towards disempowerment of libraries and library staff

Participants from both groups expressed feelings of frustration concerning the role and qualification of library staff. They based their views on salaries and the position of librarians at the bottom of the scale of the organizational chart.

...a librarian in the UR, is someone who is treated at the low level, compared to other staff in the UR. [...] yet we serve the lecturers, we serve students and researchers ... this has implication on salaries and when you talk to librarians, they are not happy of how they are treated, they are frustrated... There is a promise to be treated as others in a new structure and we are waiting (LM).
A key point in this passage is the concern about the skills of the library staff not being recognized. This lack of recognition has significant consequences on salary treatment of library staff but also affects their performances. The frustration that the library staff then express is also noted by some members of the senior management, as in the following quote.

*The library staff are very... very dispirited they, are not very vibrant... they are like... we are disadvantaged people... we are not recognized... Therefore, I would like that attitude to change. They should feel part and parcel of the academic support enterprise, and the more they go for training the more they get exposed to how modern libraries work and I think it is going to help (SM).*

The senior manager articulates the state of the library staff who express that they feel dispirited and excluded. Such feelings and the kind of frustration talked about in both of the above excerpts can be linked to a resistance to change. From the former account, the frustration emanates from a perceived non-recognition of librarian skills and the role of the library. Frustration as well as feelings of exclusion expressed in the latter statement appear to result from comparing the UR library staff situation to how other librarians in the other places are treated. Such frustration also might come from that the UR library staff are aware of what they are supposed to do, but not feeling as if they have resources for doing. The relationship between frustration and resistance to change is difficult to explore. One might be the result of the other or vice versa, but it seems reasonable to assume that a state of mind can influence the doings and the attitudes of a person in a stressful context. Nevertheless, the senior manager attributed such frustration to a lack of confidence in delivering the required services. According to the empirical data, such a lack of confidence might also emanate from insufficient qualifications and/or skills.

*You know sometimes the frustration comes when you can’t offer the services that are required because you are not trained, so we must train people so that they feel confident and capacitated, we must encourage them to attend conferences so that they network and get knowledge and be empowered, yeah! (SM).*
The senior manager connects the frustration of the library staff to the context where necessary resources are lacking. The lack of competencies and qualification is here seen as an explanation of the frustration of the staff. The senior manager recognizes the lack of competent and qualified librarians and suggests trainings as a part of the solution to fill the gaps in skills and qualifications of library staff. In several cases, participants from both groups emphasized the lack of forums and platforms for library staff to get together and discuss library related issues. Ideally, such forums would contribute to the cultivation of practice-specific skills and knowledge and, in extension, constitute a resource for the development of librarianship as a profession among others within the UR. From an analytical perspective, one can conceptualize a forum of this kind as a mediational means for professional development.

The university has been undergoing transformations since its inauguration in 2013. Still, most of the staff are still in uncertainty about their workplaces. During these transformations, staff are transferred from one college/campus to another without any prior discussion with the university management. This can lead to a more complex situation of resistance as discussed earlier in Chapter 6 regarding the mobility of human resources. In this kind of situation, staff seem to develop a sort of resistance to changes. The managers considered the librarians to demonstrate certain attitudes of fear and resistance to change toward becoming part of one new university. They considered this fear as a handicap to the mobility of staff and to the quality of services rendered to the university as in the following statement.

So there is that fear of change by people ...say I am in comfort zone, I do not want to change nor to move to another library... so, this can create resistance and impact on quality of the services as well (SM).

From this account, the senior manager expresses worries about the attitudes of the librarians or staff in general. Connecting this quote to the issues of mobility discussed in Chapter 6, it seems as if the risk of suddenly being moved from one campus to another is what constitutes the most prominent fear for staff. It appears that people in the library are working under conditions where they experience intimidation by seniors who have the power to change drastically the lives of the low
ranked employees in the libraries. According to the senior manager in the above excerpt, there are also potential risks that such attitudes affect the quality of services. Moreover, these attitudes might be linked to individuals’ reasons about qualifications and the library staff not being equally treated compared to other categories of staff. This can incite some of the library staff to feel the need for establishment of strategies to empower libraries and library staff. In addition to the difficulties that primarily reside in the organizational structure, there are also internal difficulties within libraries. These concern interpersonal relations, leadership, collaboration and team working among library staff. There are also issues about internal communication, which is not straightforward in some libraries. Librarians noted cases where they could not get support from their line managers in order to achieve their initiatives.

The leadership at this library does not support staff initiatives. [...] In most cases when a library staff proposes an innovation, it is rare that the director supports the idea for innovation... this can frustrate the staff (LS).

The emphasis in this statement is about the library leadership that may be not willing to support and value ideas emanating from library staff. In the eyes of the librarian, this inhibits individual initiatives, which may contribute to the disempowerment of library professionals instead of supporting each other for mutual growth. However, the reasons for not supporting an initiative might vary depending on its type and the requirements for implementation. It can, for example, be a matter of different views concerning what resources are needed for accomplishing something, which, in turn, depends on different actors having different understandings of what matters for efficient library work and services. In such situations, the staff appear to become inactive and just do the minimum without any motivation to attain excellence of services.

The kind of dilemma touched upon above, where there is disagreement among line managers and library staff, highlights two problematic aspects of the new arrangement resulting from the merger. There is not only a clear gap comprising defective communication between dispersed groups of library staff and the centralized top management. It also seems as if the new organizational structure has caused a specific problem for middle management, who sometimes is torn between
loyalties to their staff and the top management. The organizational constituents, on different levels in the hierarchical structure, all seem to cultivate their own more or less situated practices accompanied with their respective context-bound values and norms.

Yet another example of this can be identified. If communication between staff and line managers was problematic, there are also complexities related to the communication between non-professional library staff and professional librarians.

_It is also difficult to team up with colleagues who are not trained in librarianship. It is a problem to team work. You cannot work as a team because you cannot communicate professionally. This is also a problem (LS)._ 

This is again a manifestation of poorly matched communities of practice where crucial differences appear in the form of professional loyalties, values, aspirations and language. It is hence not only between the senior management and library staff that we can see this kind of miss-match but also within library staff. With reference to the above excerpt, it can be asserted that differences of qualifications, skills and knowledge among library staff constitute a challenge for libraries. It appears that the ideal community of practice, consisting of librarians, does not take shape since it contains such a variety of people with different backgrounds regarding education and experiences from library work. This appears as a gap alongside others acknowledged by participants as discussed throughout different sections of this chapter.

8.9 Chapter summary

The geographical distance is a problem to management of resources and to management of libraries. However, with the aim of transforming traditional libraries into modern digital ones, the geographical distance can also be a reason to develop infrastructure and building the capacity both in human and material resources. The results in this chapter indicate a disconnect problem between the expectations and the practices at libraries. The participants from the group of library and the group of senior managers have expected a modern library as an outcome from the merger. In that respect, they directed their sayings and their reasoning around resources towards what could be expected in modern
libraries. While according to these participants, a modern or ideal library should have adequate technological equipment, materials and staff in order to meet the needs of users, they emphasized a lack of adequate materials and tools such as policies, infrastructure and facilities, suitable equipment and human resources and a capacity building scheme. Consequently, there are goals, which are not achieved due to a lack of necessary resources. The library staff assert to be willing to achieve more, but face challenges that hamper and discourage them along the way. They would wish and like to be more active and proactive to achieve a range of services – in line with international standards – but a lack of necessary resources constitutes a challenge. The library staff and library managers furthermore face challenges connected to the centralized leadership. These challenges include disempowerment connected to the exclusion from decision-making, and a lack of support from senior management, which serves to increase lack of motivation. In connection to the above said, it appears that there is a disconnect problem between the rhetoric about an idealized idea of a library and the actual practices taking place at the dispersed libraries. The management is thus demonstrating a sort of ‘pay lip-service’ to the importance of an academic library. While in the rhetoric the library is seen as a central unit, in practice, the results show that the UR libraries are peripheral, often neglected units. This disconnect problem also appears in the understandings of the merger and resource sharing presented in the previous chapters. The next chapter is devoted to discussions of solutions suggested by the participants in order to overcome the challenges identified in this and the previous empirical chapters.
9 Solutions to challenges related to library management in the merger

9.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the participants’ discussions of possible solutions to the problems and challenges identified in the previous empirical chapters. There is a wealth of such discussions in the empirical data. It must be acknowledged, however, that it is not easy for the various actors to suggest effective solutions as all of them are situated in their respective library or management practices and thereby possibly prevented from achieving the necessary distance to analyze the problems at hand. The empirical data do not allow me to quantitatively infer the participants’ different approaches to the library’s situation in the merger. What is presented in this chapter is rather an inventory of various ideas for solutions that appeared in the interviews with both groups of participants (senior managers and library staff). Since the participants’ suggestions include potentially fruitful ways for enabling the advancement of libraries, they are presented in this chapter for all actors, especially managers, to consider. For the library-based participants, what primarily counts is to develop and maintain libraries that function according to international standards. According to them, it is fundamentally necessary that the decision makers change their views about libraries, librarians and the profession of librarianship. If the decision makers consider the library as central to the university, they need to demonstrate this through investing in it and thereby contribute to the library’s improvement. The suggested ways to improve library services include financial and technical input, e.g. the formulation of strategies for development of resources, staff capacity building, recruitment, promotion, placement and alignment (under academic instead of administrative units). The senior managers and decision-makers, on their side, urge library staff to be pro-active, confident and committed to meet the expectations from the merger. Through their statements, tensions that are connected to the disconnect problem come to the fore. The hierarchical structure that characterizes the merged organization and the variety of understandings and ideas of how and what is needed to develop libraries is more apparent in their comments. This will be discussed in the conclusion and discussion chapters. In the following subsections, the presentation of the suggested solutions are structured according to three themes related to the:
• Decision making process;
• Library profession and how is talked about; and
• Library institution.

9.2 Solutions related to decision making process

The solutions discussed in this section are those that are related to challenges and problems identified in previous chapters that are linked to the centralized organizational managerial system and different understandings about libraries in the merger process. These are presented as two key solutions concerning, on the one hand, libraries and decision-making and, on the other hand, decentralization of power and delegation of decision making at colleges/campus level where library practices are located.

9.2.1 Librarians and the decision-making process

The library staff recognized their role in the development of libraries – though not as a part of decision-making process. According to them, there is a need for opportunities to get together to exchange and discuss library related issues, e.g. a forum or platform where library issues can be discussed.

*I pray that there may be a forum, where we can talk about how to improve our services; there we could lift our library from where we are today or where we have been ten years back to another level (LS).*

This reflects the will among the library staff to lay the ground for a community of practice of library professionals. Such a community, that would bring together the library staff scattered all around in the dispersed libraries, appears here to be an explicit way to also advocate for libraries. Managers also see the community of library staff as a strength and a way for library staff to embrace changes and contribute to the development of the UR through diversities.

*Of course, like we have to be amenable to change. We come from a point where we were entities or institutions in their own rights with separate library directors. For example, the library director at this campus has now to report to someone else. I think they*
have to see themselves as a team pulling in the same direction, all coming with different strength. I think there will not arise any sense of either competition or wanting to say we are [in this college or campus...] and we do not want interference from other people, to me I do not see any problems rather a strength (SM).

The building of a community of professionals can lead to participation in other academic activities such as research. Even if the library staff were seen by the senior managers to be disillusioned and therefore not very active, the library staff see themselves as actors of change within librarianship in Rwanda. The library staff expressed a need for informing the management about libraries and librarianship through advocacy and promotional activities.

Our decision-makers do not value the library. Therefore, whatever I can plan to do is not valued before we inform them about our services, we have to market ourselves and shout out that the library is core. As long as decision-makers think that anyone, even an illiterate person, can be a librarian or at least work in a library there is nothing I can do except rising awareness about library and convince them to change their views about libraries and librarianship (LS).

The library staff emphasizes pro-activity as a way to overcome the challenges connected to the hierarchies and understandings about libraries. Here, the library staff uses ‘core’ as a shorthand metaphor for articulating and aiming at repositioning the library within the university. The use of the metaphor is a representative of other participants including senior managers who also used it during the interviews. Other metaphors such as heart and central were also used to emphasize the position of the library function within the university. However, in several of these instances throughout the empirical data there are reasons to suspect that the use of this kind of metaphor primarily functions as a way of paying lip service to the centrality and importance of the library.

Moreover, the library staff and some senior managers also see a potential solution in the reorganization of libraries for achieving their mission, and thereby be raised to a level of international standards of librarianship. They see as an alternative to the existing, previously
mentioned, command and control management function, the establishment of a stable managerial structure and a fair distribution of decision-making capacity down to colleges and campuses where libraries are located. Their ideas concerning this matter are in line with an understanding central to sociocultural theory, namely that practices are easier to understand and manage by those who have situated knowledge about that, which is to be managed and decided about.

9.2.2 Soften strict centralization to decentralization of power and delegation of decision-making

Concerning the challenges and problems identified in relation to the centralized organizational system and the library managerial structure, which appeared to disconnect libraries from their directorate and the university management, the participants (from all groups) advocated for decentralization of decision-making capacity downward to campus or colleges level instead of centralization at headquarters.

*To me if we plan very well with the one University of Rwanda scattered in all places in mind, you know... it is not one university in Kigali, it is a university with branches all around, we can take advantage of the merger [...]. However, we do top-down decisions because we think we are the people who are well informed and then we decide, like we decide for a baby, we do not ask for the babies’ opinions (SM).*

What the manager implies here highlights that at different sites people have their own ways of doing things in line with their respective contexts. Plausibly in opposition to the command and control organization as established in Chapter 8, the senior manager in the above quotation implicitly notes the necessity for the management to consider that the colleges and campuses are different parts of the UR though located in various geographical locations. In theory, this could stimulate the staff to contribute actively to the development of libraries and the university, but the way in which the senior manager expresses him/herself still demonstrates a clear position concerning decision-making. It is stated that “we do top-down decisions” since the belief is that senior management is “well informed” and therefore should make the decisions. This is a standpoint that indeed can be taken as a suggestion for the command and control arrangement. When the senior
manager furthermore talks about the library staff, and the dispersed libraries, as “babies” whose opinions they “do not ask for”, it becomes clear that the senior management thinks is in the right position to make decisions. The advantages of decentralization of power and decision making at local units of management is said to include the possibility to handle libraries’ problems at local level. This includes the necessity to observe a certain degree of trust and empowerment of colleges and campus managers to attend library matters and local needs with appropriate solutions together with library managers on site. However, at the same time it is stated that decisions must be taken by those who are well informed, i.e. senior management, which proposes a model of centralized power and decision making.

In my previous institute, we used to have our internal budget, internal generated funds. [...] we used to plan for how to use that money to supplement Government funds in accordance to our internal needs, and ..., we have been doing well. However, currently the internal budget is concentrated at the UR (SM).

This senior manager points at a budgetary disempowerment. The people at colleges or campuses do not have the power over the purse. It is clear that this manager would like to have seen the establishment of a functional system of power delegation and decision making at colleges and campus. This would aid to cater for local needs timely without waiting for the central management. Such decentralization would also strengthen collaboration between colleges or campus managers and libraries, and thus contribute to reduce the distance between them. The concern is not only the location of power and decisions but also quite specifically the location of decision-making regarding economic funds.

According to me, they would have considered campuses. For me I would wish that they made sure that at each campus there is a library with a director or someone who manages and handles daily issues and enough staff able to satisfy the needs of users (LS).

In this quote, the library staff emphasizes the importance of a decentralization of the library managerial positions with reference to the situated character of library services and the variety of needs at different sites. The consideration of each library as an organic
community of professionals, serving their respective user groups at local sites, is in line with the idea of building some sort of the dispersed UR library community of practice through diversity and complementarity. However, from the previous descriptions, some libraries only have a couple of staff, and not all are formally trained for the librarian profession. A concern here is how an organic community of professionals could develop in local branches. Such a development would, among other things, necessitate an effort from the management to equip libraries with trained professionals.

The solutions to overcome challenges and problems connected to the command and control organization include the consideration of the situatedness of library work at various sites. This would involve the decentralization and delegation of power and decision-making to the colleges and campuses. In this way, local leadership will be enabled to attend to local library matters in collaboration with other library managers or library staff at other sites throughout the UR library system.

9.3 Solutions related to library profession and how it is talked about within the UR

The solutions in this section relate to problems identified in conjunction with the location of library staff in the organizational structure and in relation to the librarians’ and management’s viewpoints of librarianship. The suggested solutions are clustered according to the problems of labelling of library staff, the (lack of) recruitment strategy and promotion structure for the people working in the libraries.

9.3.1 Shift the label of librarians from administrative to academic

Based on the challenges and problems faced in connection to the classification and treatment of librarians as administrative staff, which signals a view of the library as peripheral to the university’s core activities, participants from both groups suggested a shift in labelling of librarians from administrative to academic staff. This was suggested as something that could serve to upgrade the status of not only the librarians but the whole library, countering the common narrative of the library as a peripheral unit.
First is to reconsider library services as academic services and not administrative. The important thing for me is to be seen as an academic and not somewhere in the middle as we are now, in one part we are somehow in administrative and in another we are in academic, so it should be clear... and let us be in academic because we mainly work with academics (LS).

The value of the library and library staff is in this quotation measured in terms of the services to the community. According to this member of the library staff, these services appear to be the basis for the labelling of the staff. However, this might not be the most effective measurement as it is also charged with expectations from both groups of participants, albeit from different perspectives.

I think there has been a decision that they [the library staff] will not be categorized as administrative staff, yeah. I do not know the name but it is towards being academicians rather than administrators (SM).

From this manager’s statement, the management has already decided about the shift from administrative to academic. However, the implementation of the decision appears to be a problem when comparing this statement to the previous one. The interviews with library staff were conducted ten months after the interviews with the managers, but one can see that there was still uncertainty on the side of the library staff whether the re-classification would actually take place. This is yet another of all the discrepancies that constitute manifestations of the disconnect problem, the mismatch between the rhetoric and the actual practices. It furthermore shows the lack of formal communication and the delays in implementing decisions.

The library staff and some of the managers considered the change of management and the public’s views of the library and librarianship to be of a great significance for the libraries, but also for the library staff’s development, confidence and positioning and, in extension, for the whole profession of librarianship. According to them, the change of the management’s understandings of libraries and librarianship provided a basis for the decisions and plans toward the development of libraries. Eventually, despite the understandings about libraries within the UR, there should be other conditions at national level such as an
employment code and an educational system resulting in a change in how libraries are considered. The shift from an administrative to an academic group, as mentioned above by the senior manager, was considered by the library staff to be rhetoric that could take time to realize and put into practice. Such a shift would necessarily call for an upgraded level of education allowing at least some librarians to conduct research and be integrated in the teaching faculty. Moreover, this shift can also entail potential changes in terms of how the libraries are managed and how librarians are recruited. With reference to the scarcity of qualified staff, as discussed in Chapter 8, the shift would be a good reason for the management to start an academic department of library and information science or a school of librarianship.

9.3.2 Reform of recruitment strategy

The solution suggested in this section are for overcoming the challenges connected to the considerations of the library as a ‘dumping place’ as expressed in Chapter 6.

> [M]y experience from some of the former institutions that form the UR is that when somebody was not fitting anywhere, the management would take him or her to the library... that is not good at all, we do not want that. Really, a librarian is somebody who is going to assist people who are learning, so if himself or herself is not fit to be even a common administrator, then how can they be fit to be librarians? (SM).

This reflects how some of the managers were considering libraries in the merged institutions. People that did not fit elsewhere were placed in the libraries. The statement emphasizes a low credit attributed to libraries and administrative staff with a hierarchical viewpoint on various professions with reference to administrative and academic staff. The library staff and some of the managers judged the consideration of the library as a place of non-performing staff to have negative effects on library performance and services.

The library staff and some senior managers suggested a reform of the recruitment strategy for libraries. A reformed strategy would also be a way to recognize both the library as a core function (instead of a peripheral unit) and librarianship as a profession in need of
professionals and qualified staff. Some managers used their experiences from recruiting library staff to their former institutions to formulate the recommendations for a change of the recruitment strategy at the UR.

Thus, the reform of how staff is recruited was suggested as a way of making the library into a place for professional workers, people who are skilled to support all types of users and able to perform community outreach. This strategy can be expected to lead to change of considerations of libraries from being a “dumping place” of various staff that have not functioned well within different positions at the University to a professional unit able to contributing to the core business of the university. Consequently, if adhering to the requirements for the academic staff, librarianship will be considered as both a profession and a practice with need for more and regular training. Furthermore, librarianship will in this way secure decent treatment by management, including fair wages and systematic promotion as other professions within the UR. Participants furthermore expressed that an arrangement as the one suggested here would prompt the library staff to meet international standards.

9.3.3 Adjust library structure to international standards

The possible course of action, suggested by the library staff and some managers, to attend challenges related to the UR library concerns is the adjustment of the UR library structure according to principles applied in modern libraries worldwide. On this note, library staff talked about having guiding documents such as a UR library policy (including plans for collection development), a clear statement regarding job classification and a staff recruitment strategy. For the librarians, the label and job classification plays a key role as a sign of identity, attachment and belonging to a certain community of professionals.

You find someone is ... for us they used to call us “library officers”, others are maybe called other names I do not know like library assistant ...at least for them that is one of the qualifications that are known worldwide, if you are called assistant librarian it is well-known but not library officer(LS).

What this library staff notes here is that the building of a professional identity for the people belonging to a same community and working
together requires an established terminology. Such a community appears to be grounded in the sameness of services and labels of the engaged professionals. Even if each library has its own ways of working and used to be working as separate entities before the merger, the will to provide the same services throughout the merged university is assumed to boost the building of the community. However, the participants from library and manager groups sense the need for a functional organization system, which links together the different libraries.

*But the library should be one, managed as one entity and people see themselves as members of the university, one entity answering [reporting] to one director and all the resources are shared and people help each other (SM).*

The different libraries can be connected together in different ways. What the manager notes here reflects the necessity of bearing in mind the dispersion of the UR components in different sites. This implies setting up a functioning system to ensure the coordination and integration of communities of practice situated at various libraries.

*Even the UR library organizational chart has not been well thought of. For instance, at [...] University and many other libraries I have been to, they have the main library with a director, deputy directors and senior librarians. All process and acquisition are handled at the main library. However, they have a common catalog where everyone can be connected to the catalogs of other libraries and campuses (LS).*

The organizational structure as a key guiding document for administration and management of libraries has to be established in accordance to the context of the university. Moreover, it appears from the above excerpt that the building of the community can be done through connection of library services such as a united catalog. Setting a functional organizational structure and a system for services appears to be key in bringing the libraries closely together in collaboration. However, in connection to the command-and-control system of leadership as discussed in previous chapters, there is other guidance needed for the libraries and library staff to function.
About policies, again we are working as confined in a closed place with no way to work freely or innovate. As there is no clear guideline for library collaborations, whatever you want to do, you ask yourself what is next, what are the consequences? If there was a policy in place you can follow it but without it, you are limited, you do not want to take risks. So, for me it matters to put in place a policy, measures to follow, just to make it official, and an agreed upon arrangement for librarians to know their role in all of that. When there is no policy, things are not in their places (LS).

This statement highlights the library staff’s fear connected to the hierarchical command-and-control organization and leadership. The quotation reflects a sense of disempowerment among the library staff at their local libraries at the same time as they are requested by the management to be visionary and innovative. Contrasting views concerning the logic of the organization are in place. The library staff are asking for an efficient command-and-control organization. Senior managers are asking the librarians to be an independent, visionary and innovative force within the UR. As a consequence, senior managers who are situated in this strong command-and-control organization appear to reject the institutional logics of such an organization. If the library staff are to build a community of practice characterized by visionary views and innovation, there obviously needs to be a sense of responsibility as professionals and necessary resources at their disposal for them to function.

9.3.4 Introduction of promotion structure

Concerning the view of librarianship as a profession, library staff and some senior managers emphasized the need to revisit or establish an internal policy regarding promotions of librarians. They suggested setting up a clear structure of promotion for librarians and their position within the university. In this regard, the examples of some conditions for being a library staff from universities in neighboring countries (Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania) served as inspirational examples of how the UR library staff could be viewed in the new structure. It is believed that the importance of setting up principles for promotion from one professional grade to another would as a consequence lead to competition and eventually the improvement of services.
For me with the structure of the university, the classifications of librarians would have been made according to international standards. The echelons of librarians would have been drawn and it would have been known that if somebody is recruited, s/he will be promoted to another echelon after a certain period of time or achievement, there s/he would be working hard to be promoted from one level to another (LS).

The promotion was proposed as a motivation to work hard and a sign of recognition of librarianship as a profession. The principles regarding promotion were suggested to be based on qualification and merit of the staff in line with how it works for academic staff. This was seen to not only serve as a motivation for hard work, but also as a justification for a gain in hierarchy based on seniority and qualification.

It would have been clear principles and requirements of how a person rises from the echelon from the time he or she is being recruited to a next level and from that level to another third level and... I think that this would have been in place maybe after ten years of service, after hardworking, after getting trainings and qualifications, I will be on this level. But, it is not there (LS).

Participants (from both groups) tend to see the promotion from different viewpoints depending on their experiences, work conditions and position. In the above excerpt, the library staff’s starting point is job experience and seniority in library work. This is supposed to account for the acquisition of competences and skills during the work in contrast (or in addition) to the educational qualification.

In Africa I can talk mostly of the University of [...] it was really good because you could see even the professionals have to peer with Ph.Ds. The librarians were categorized as academicians; they must go through the ranks from assistant all the way to professor. The directors of libraries since [year] were having Ph.Ds. and all librarians were trained in librarianship, and it is the same for the university of [...] (SM).

The promotion based on academic qualification and degrees is here viewed in connection to the requirements for academic staff. This reflects great expectations from some of the managers toward libraries and librarians. Such expectations would not constitute a problem if
there were facilitations for staff to upgrade their academic qualifications. One possibility mentioned is to have an academic department of library and information science (LIS) in Rwanda, another one would be to send library staff abroad and a third option could be to facilitate LIS education through a distance mode. However, it should be clear that the value of libraries and librarians might not necessarily come along with the ‘academic label’. The promotion structure can, according to the participants, be a way of recognizing the library as an institution that needs a clear managerial structure and enough resources, which stands in contrast to what was discussed in previous chapters where the library was seen as peripheral.

9.4 Solutions related to library institution and management

The solutions suggested in this section concerns issues about the library as an institution. They were framed in line with the challenges and problems identified in connection to resources in libraries. The participants including library staff and some senior managers viewed the library as a central unit in need of enough resources and professionals. In connection to the problems of scarcity of resources, participants from both groups emphasized the need for more resources and more efficient management of these resources. The participants moreover suggested that the senior management and decision makers take a step further to invest in and capacitate libraries. The emphasis was on increasing the budget for libraries and building the capacity of library staff. The participants in both groups perceived this step as a booster to the achievement of the expectations from the merger and as a way of enabling the envisioned changes in teaching, learning, and research at the university, which the merger is associated with.

In order to be able to achieve their mission of becoming developed, modern libraries, library staff advocated for continual training for library staff, and provision of various types of resources for libraries. Regarding resources, the library staff recognized the importance of the support from SIDA. However, they requested an extra budget from the Government of Rwanda in order to cover the provisions of ICT equipment, buildings, and library collections. In connection to the gaps identified in human resources, the suggestion was the establishment of an academic department or a school of LIS in Rwanda. This was seen
as a sustainable solution to attend to the present and future needs of qualified librarians in the country and thus meeting the needs in building the capacity of library staff.

9.4.1 Staff capacity building, training and benchmarking

In relation to competences and qualifications, participants from both groups expressed a need to support library staff in upgrading their academic levels and competences, but they also advocated for reconsideration of librarianship as a profession, which deals with both books (and other media) and people. The urge for capacity building was viewed in conjunction with two key expectations from the merger, namely the possibility to shift from administrative to academic staff, and the will to move towards standards of the modern library. If the shift from administrative to academic staff entails teaching and research activities, this would obviously imply certain competences and skills that most library staff may not have. Therefore, building the capacity and competences of librarians to meet the requirements of being academic staff would be necessary. In relation to the lack of competences discussed in previous chapters, it would be important to set up strategies to attend to staff development and capacity building for meeting the requirements of modern libraries. In this regard, the participants from libraries and the management emphasized the need for regular academic trainings to upgrade the qualifications of the library staff.

*If we could get regular training as other civil servants from other services are trained, like teaching staff at least, to catch up and update our knowledge ...you know...information technology evolves continuously and knowledge should be updated...(LS).*

This quotation reflects the belief that the only way to benefit from UR’s capacity building scheme and its academic programs as well as the short course trainings that lead to advanced degrees or certificates is to be an academic staff. This becomes necessary as these educational efforts primarily are aimed at the academic staff. What is expressed in the above quotation can serve as an explanation for why library staff would wish to be labeled academic staff. It appears that library staff need regular trainings to not only fit the requirements and changes in the field of libraries, but also to embrace the technological development, which shapes but also are shaped by social interactions and institutions. Moreover, building the capacity of library staff is a way to fill the gap
in human resources, which appeared to constrain activities at the various libraries.

The participants from both groups talk about libraries to be ‘the heart’ of or central to the university’s core mission of teaching, learning and research. As previously mentioned, these metaphors underscore the participants’ conviction that the library has an important function to fill within the university. This is one way of repositioning the library within the merger. The libraries should not be seen as peripheral entities but as a crucial part of the envisioned modern library system. It is in line with these suggestions that most participants, including senior managers, urge the university management to act in terms of capacitating libraries with qualified staff.

*Yes we need a new library building at our campus, but I am very keen on making sure that our librarians are quality professionals. The investment in their education should start early, librarians should go and study now and maybe when they come back, the building will catch up (SM).*

This manager sees the staff’s capacity building as a priority for the university. From attending different academic programs, the staff could upgrade their educational levels and thus acquire the capacities to fit in the university’s agenda for research development. Beside the regular and formal educational programs, the participants at different working positions (library or management) suggested other ways of building the capacity of staff, for example participation in international gatherings of professionals such as library conferences and visits to advanced and well-functioning libraries for job shadowing and benchmarking.

*[E]ven if we can talk about what we think and advise on what we know about librarianship, we are still lagging behind, we have to see what other people are experiencing, what they have achieved, so we have to visit. We need to join library professional associations so that we can learn from others (LS).*

Library work is necessarily to a great extent a local practice shaped by the context and location in which it is enacted, but it also includes generic features. The library staff sought for opportunities to learn these and other things from experiencing best practices in other libraries. According to the library staff and senior managers, there should be no
loss in doing site visits to learn how other professionals work or handle situations.

_We are not reinventing the wheel! What we are doing at the UR has been done in other places. It is just seeing how other people are doing it. For instance at the University of Borås where you study, or any other university in Sweden or any other developed countries you and other UR library staff can see how they do it, if they have two or three campuses you can see how they connect with each other (SM)._  

Site visits in the form of job shadowing or benchmarking can benefit individual staff visiting as well as their libraries. According to statements in the empirical data, such visits can strengthen and/or broaden the existing skills and serve as inspiration for innovations concerning how library work is conducted.

Concerning the role of libraries in the university, one of the ways to make the library play its role in the context of the merger might be not only to join effort through sharing existing resources, but also by updating the libraries in line with Rwanda’s ambition of being a knowledge-based economy. Consequently, with regards to the problems depending on the lack of an academic department of LIS, the participants suggested the establishment of such a department as a sustainable solution to the scarcity of qualified staff.

_You know, the only one solution to the scarcity of qualified staff in libraries is the establishment of a school or a department for librarianship to train librarians, young librarians to fill the gap. For me, I hope that with the SIDA collaboration it is possible to start a school of librarianship that would provide education from undergraduates. Otherwise, we will always be in shortage of trained librarians. For instance, in the near future, some of our staff will retire and I do not see ways of replacement (LS)._  

The library staff in this quotation highlights the necessity to attend to the scarcity of qualified librarians from inside the country. This strategy of providing opportunities for education appears to be a solution to scarcity of human resources in the long term. However, considering that starting a school or a department could take time, short trainings can serve as a transitional solution to keep abreast and upgrade the level of knowledge of library staff.
In addition, concerning staff capacity building, some solutions were also formulated in relation to the development of infrastructure and other material resources.

9.4.2 Development of infrastructure and resources

In order to attend to the challenges identified in connection to infrastructure and other material resources, the library staff and managers from different locations suggested a number of practical solutions.

*I think it is our responsibility [as the UR] to look for the money to invest in getting proper infrastructure that goes with modern libraries such as all these systems that we want to encourage and inculcate in our learning and teaching systems such as ICTs, video conference and online teaching methods, etc. I think this is where our partnership with Sweden is going to be helpful. Now I know that probably the [SIDA] program may be more in human resource capacity building than infrastructure (SM).*

Great expectations concerning teaching and learning can only be fulfilled through adequate supporting services, such as libraries. In the views of the senior manager in the above excerpt, partnership can be helpful in several aspects of resource development. S/he emphasizes that the UR has to ensure the availability of necessary resources in order to achieve its mission. This requires, for example, that plans for resources are thought about in accordance to the contextual requirements and particularities of each library or college.

*[O]ne of the libraries I visited in [name of a country] is a well-equipped library; it has everything to facilitate the users, not least equipment. They do not have many staff to help users; they use the system that helps students to borrow and return the materials independently without consulting the staff, without waiting on the queue, it is a computerized library. It is a well-organized library, it is a proper place to be for information search and learning ... all equipment is there (LS).*

From the perspective of this library staff, there are certain features that one can expect to find in a well-functioning modern library. What is emphasized in this quote is the well-designed mixture of human and material resources for efficient library services. Considering the two
statements above vis-a-vis the challenges related to resources in libraries as identified in previous chapters, it appears that the achievement of the envisioned modern library system is still at an early stage, at least in terms of available resources. Consequently, a prominent feature in the empirical data is the assertion that the UR management needs to make a substantial effort in investing in libraries.

Beside the solutions formulated about the need for change in how libraries are managed, there are also solutions suggested concerning the conduct of library staff in general.

9.4.3 Pro-activity and self-confidence

The future perspectives on libraries discussed in this section were formulated in order to meet challenges and problems related to some of the attitudes of library staff such as fear and lack of confidence. Most of the solutions suggested in this section, emanate from the group of senior managers who urge librarians to be pro-active and build their communities from their local libraries. What is emphasized is formulated in accordance to the expectations from the senior management and related to the role of librarians in achieving the kind of modern library that responds to requirements in teaching, learning, and research.

I do not want a director who is a supervisor... you know... someone who is there to oversee what is going on ... you know I want the one who is able to... someone who can be there and help when it is needed. I do not want someone who is just in the office to sign or just that! No! I also want... a director of library should also be a researcher and some members of the unit should conduct some research as well (SM).

The manager notes the role of the library manager in building sustainable communities of practice at the local libraries. This reflects the extent to which library managers need to demonstrate certain qualities and competences, which have to be put into use for the service to the local community.
So then we need the library committee for the university. Nevertheless, only librarians can push for that. We need you [people] to stand and raise the thing really. You cannot wait for principals to push that. Therefore, librarians need to stand up and say ‘we have to change things’. If people do not perceive librarians to be bothered then they are not bothered themselves because they are the experts (SM).

What is emphasized here is the call for a functional coordinating committee and that it is the librarians themselves that need to bring change. According to this senior manager, the getting together in a sort of formal advisory board is of a substantial importance that may lead library staff to take more initiatives. This would boost collaboration and recognition of differences among libraries whereby librarians have the opportunities to put their competences into use for complementarity.

Regarding qualifications and identity of library staff, it was mainly managers who articulated the need for library staff to be pro-active and make use of their competencies.

*I mean actually, for me the library could take a lead in showing how education and resource sharing could be done. For instance, the librarians could, very well do video conference as an aid for teaching and learning. Because inevitably they will be dealing with each other or they talk to each other regularly and do the same. So the library can take a lead in this, the rest of us can jump on and follow(SM).*

This senior manager highlights the importance of the library and the role of librarians in the teaching and learning activities. According to this line of reasoning stated in the above statement, library staff could be more active together as a team capable to lead initiatives. This can be a way to build their identity. Even though degrees are required and considered as proof of qualifications, for senior managers the most important appear to be actual competences and the effort made by the degree holder to accomplish his/her role. Otherwise, competences would not matter if they were not used to serve users and the university.

*We want librarians who are ready and willing to network through conferences; partake into regional and international associations of library professionals but they also need to
contribute in terms of being more pro-active wanting to learn more enjoying benefiting from the exposure (SM).

This manager points to the necessity for library staff to engage in the activities that lead to international networks of professionals. Against the accounts in previous chapters, from which it stands clear that the budgetary provisions to the libraries are remarkably limited, the ideas communicated in the quotation must be seen as nothing but an idealized vision of how things ought to be.

Even though some of the participants urged library staff to raise their voice and defend their cause, others questioned the power centralization and communication system within the entire university in general, and between libraries and senior management in particular. On the one hand, the senior managers reproach librarians for not being pro-active enough while on the other hand librarians consider the senior managers to be hindering their initiatives or at least not be supportive enough. Such tensions might be linked to the lack of policy and guiding documents (presented as challenges in Chapter 8), which would provide clear guidelines on how to do things.

9.5 Chapter summary

As can be seen in this chapter, the suggested solutions range from organizational and managerial structure of the UR libraries to the establishment of an academic program in LIS in the national education system. The suggested solutions to the problems emphasize the importance of adopting a viewpoint of modern libraries in the university. This means a demand for a reorganization of the libraries, a reconsideration of their role in the university and the change of understanding regarding libraries and librarianship. Accomplishing this suggested set of changes requires investment in libraries to provide necessary resources. Furthermore, there are suggestions of a change of recruitment strategy and fair consideration of librarianship as a profession in need of professionals and enough resources. In connection to that, a combination of a carefully planned capacity building scheme and a reform of the recruitment strategy was seen as an important tool to equip libraries with qualified staff. However, as discussed in this chapter, there are tensions among librarians and managers since they tend to have different views concerning what is needed for the
development of the libraries. This issue is returned to in the discussion and conclusion chapters, 10 and 11.
Part III: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

10 Discussion

This study set out with the purpose of studying libraries within the context of the merger of the University of Rwanda. The study’s overarching research question concerns how the visions of the merger, the mergers’ budgetary aspects and provisions, and the UR library management’s understanding of the library system, are related to the practices at libraries. Taken together, the key results that are discussed in this chapter form the answer to the overarching research question. The chapter sets out to address the four research questions, which have guided the study. They are discussed in light of the sociocultural theory and related to previous research. The chapter comprises five sections starting with an introductory summary of the results. Thereafter, each of the research questions are addressed:

- How is resource sharing talked about and understood by various categories of staff at the UR in the context of the merger?
- What practices related to resource sharing and library management can be identified at the different libraries of the University of Rwanda?
- What are the potential problems and challenges to library management in the context of the merger and how do they relate to the various visions and steering documents?
- What solutions do management and library staff suggest for addressing potential problems and challenges to libraries?

10.1 Introduction

From the result chapters appears a complex setting in which the fragile and uneven library system is located. The library system as it has emerged through the merger can be traced to a conglomerate of actors, material conditions, culturally, historically and locally shaped traditions and practices. All of these contribute to the mutual shaping of what now is the university library of the University of Rwanda. The actors in the study are dispersed, but the people with most power, in the sense that
they are decision-makers, are concentrated to the centralized university management in Kigali, at the university headquarters. Library staff, including directors, trained librarians and less qualified staff, form together a bigger cohort but are to a substantial extent disempowered due to their lower-ranked positions in the hierarchical university organization. There is a range of different assumptions and expectations of the actors concerning the outcome of the new library system in the merger. Visions of what the library ought to be, what is hoped for concerning the library in the future, are frequently referred to in the result chapters. These visions and ideal scenarios are grounded in different experiences and knowledge bases. Librarians tend to, through their library and information science studies and work experiences, have a grounded and fairly detailed view of what is required for running a sufficient library and providing services relevant to their user groups. This can be contrasted with actors at central management who display ideas concerning libraries that seem to be picked up from official vision documents. A prominent idea in such documents is that the UR is going to be a modern research university with state-of-the-art facilities and resources. The ideas put forth by central management are, furthermore, often related to statements about the library as the heart or the core of the university. Such assertions are highly rhetorical in nature, but less related to the actual practices taking place in the respective libraries. On top of this profound difference regarding views of what the library system should be and how it ought to be managed, are the ways in which the budgetary means at the university’s disposal have been made use of concerning libraries. Here, again, it appears that important decisions concerning what is possible to do, or not do, in the libraries are almost solely made by those who are furthest away from the every-day practices in the libraries.

The library system and the geographical and organizational setting in which the library system has been shaped throughout the merger is characterized by a profound disconnect problem. This disconnection appears in different forms related to the context-bound situatedness of library services and the historically shaped labour management that tend to differ from one geographical site to another. The disconnect problem challenges library management, services and resource sharing in various ways. It is due not only to the geographical distance between the sites that constitute the university library system but also to the
centralized management function of the university. Moreover, the hierarchical organizational management that characterizes the UR contributes to increased distance between units and complicates practices at local libraries.

The result chapters also show how the notion – and the practice – of resource sharing is linked to the disconnect problem. The empirical data reveals two separate approaches on how to understand and deal with resource sharing in the context of the merger. Even though it is not possible to draw a clear-cut line between the two, it seems as if one primarily is embraced by library staff, i.e. those actors who spend most of their time at the libraries, who recognize that there is a lack of resources. From their point of view, resource sharing becomes a challenge, a matter of trying to do with a sum of resources that is not enough for running all the libraries in a sufficient way. I have termed this approach *resource sharing of scarcity*. It does not mean that the library staff dismiss the idea that it is necessary to share resources throughout the library system. From their perspective the notion and practice of resource sharing is about trying to manage despite limited resources. The other approach is primarily taken by those who are not engaged in library matters on a daily basis even though they take the crucial decisions concerning funding of libraries. Here, resource sharing is mainly seen as a managerial strategy connected to the notion of economy of scale. The main idea here seems to be that scaling up the organization through the merger will lead to increased resources. I have thus termed this approach *resource sharing of abundance*.

Linked to these two approaches are, furthermore, two other fundamental ideas concerning how to view and manage the library system. Those embracing the approach termed resource sharing of scarcity emphasize the need for establishing *harmonization* throughout the library system. Resources should be evenly distributed over the libraries, which should be managed in similar ways, preferably by delegation where local library directors are assigned increased decision-making power. This stands in contrast to the centralized decision-making that is the case for the present study. Those who embrace the approach of resource sharing of abundance tend to emphasize a vision strongly characterized by *modernization*. In practice, this ambition to modernize is reflected in the uneven distribution of resources, where
some libraries, primarily those located in the capital city of Kigali, are prioritized concerning, for example, well adapted facilities, IT, and number of trained staff.

To conclude this introduction to the discussion chapter, there is a set of key concepts that have appeared through the analysis, which will be brought on and function as reference points to the further discussion of the results: the disconnect problem, the practice-based notion of resource sharing of scarcity and the strategy of resource sharing of abundance, which in turn are linked to the ideas of harmonization and modernization of the university library system.

In the subsequent sections of the discussion chapter, I will return to the study’s research questions, which will be dealt with one at a time. When addressing the research questions, I will also return to and discuss my findings in relation to relevant previous literature.

10.2 Different takes on resource sharing in the context of the merger

In the subsequent sections, I address the question of how resource sharing is talked about and understood by various categories of staff at the UR in the context of the merger. As highlighted in the theory chapter, elucidating resource sharing requires that it is related to the social, political, and institutional context of the merger. A starting point of the current study was the frequent usage of the concept of resource sharing among the actors involved in the merger. It appeared as a panacea to all potential problems caused by the merger. It was also a concept that seemed to be understood and interpreted in more than one way. Although the concept is frequently used within the LIS literature (e.g. Sridhar 1995; Breeding, 2013; Acadia, 2016) and among library professionals, in the context of the merger, also actors not directly associated with the library talked about the importance of resource sharing.

The results show that the different takes on resource sharing, as something that concerns dealing with scarcity or abundance, are influenced by the social, economic, and historical conditions linked to the merger. The merger was referred to as presenting both opportunities
and challenges to resource sharing in several ways, but especially as a solution to problems of geographical distance and as a way of reorganizing resources at different sites. The respective understanding of resource sharing is linked to and dependent on the different understandings of the merger. The merger is either seen as a process and strategy to achieve the vision of a university aspiring to be a modern research-based institution, or as a situation that requires a careful and harmonized distribution of limited resources. As the merger continued, depending on the location of the participants in the UR organizational structure and in relation to library services, two contrasting views of the merger emerged. One view is characterized by optimism, the other one by pessimism. These two views also seemed to influence the talk about and understandings of resource sharing and library management.

The most ubiquitous way of talking about resource sharing is as a way to do more with less, an understanding of the many benefits of economy of scale. Following such a viewpoint, the merger allows a centralized management system to work with the general assumptions of economy of scale. As such vast resources are now available for centralized strategy, in theory it becomes possible to reap the benefits of being a much larger organization. Nonetheless, a well-functioning economy of scale usually involves scaling up something small, maintaining the same practices. A merger of organizations cannot be understood in the same way. Still, what happened was that centralized leadership identified many opportunities to pull down resources for numerous units. Obviously, as shown in the results, the libraries have not flourished with this way of thinking about resource sharing. Different examples illustrated in the results showed that in some libraries the number of staff was reduced to one or two staff. This pushed staff to work in stressful and unpleasant conditions, which also affected library services including reduced services to users. This confirm that there are limits to what is a favorable scale in the economy of scale of the HEI. Although building on data from the 1990s, Lang (2003) refers to several studies, which show that benefits of economy of scale start at 9,000 student enrollments and ends at 20,000. Currently, the UR has over 30,000 students enrolled (University of Rwanda, 2018). Furthermore, Lang (2003) points out that at some point, the economy of scale becomes a disadvantage. What Lang (2003) notes here applies to the study at hand in that the understanding of resource sharing as a way of
achieving more with less resources proved to be inappropriate for the UR libraries, at least not as the merger process unfolded.

Attached to the assumptions underpinning economy of scale is the vision of modernization, according to which the university should be first-class in teaching, research and learning. Aligned with this vision are expectations of resource sharing that include access to a vast range of facilities, staff and competencies. This understanding of resource sharing as a way of thinking about the merger emerged. One view is characterized by optimism, the other one by pessimism. These two views also seemed to influence the talk about the UR libraries, at least not as the merger process unfolded.

Scarcity and asymmetry of resources among libraries entail the necessity of harmonization. According to the pessimistic view, it therefore becomes an imperative to harmonize practices and services throughout the library system. To fulfil the vision of modernization, not only resources of various kinds but also practices and services must be in harmony, evenly enacted and distributed throughout the libraries. This process of harmonization, for example in terms of increasing the number of state-of-the-art resources and qualified librarians, would be
a way to meet the requirements of becoming an advanced library able to support research, teaching, and learning.

Resource sharing is also talked about concerning the demand of libraries and librarians to meet the constantly changing needs of users. Such needs have continued to develop in quality, quantity and sophistication during the digital transformation of the 2000s. It is highlighted in the results that according to the visions of the university, libraries and librarians should be streamlined to leverage the development of the university. For example, librarians at the UR are seen as potential collaborators in both research and teaching activities, which is similar to Otike and Omboi’s (2010) study of the establishment of a university library in Kenya where librarians were supposed to extend their duties beyond the traditional role of librarians. However, at the same time, the results show that the centralized managements’ statements about the library being the core and central unit often appeared to be limited to rhetoric since in practice libraries are treated as peripheral units, and librarians as peripheral actors, especially concerning decisions regarding provision of necessary resources for modernization and sustainability of libraries.

In conclusion, the different ways of talking about and understanding resource sharing and library management are characterized either by a sense of optimism or pessimism. The optimistic view is grounded in, and formulated according to, the rationality of economy of scale and expressed in the assumption that it is possible to do more with less. The pessimistic view, which primarily is held by those actors that are anchored in the day-to-day library work, is grounded in a more realistic assumption, which concludes that even though there is a willingness to share, the explicit mechanisms of reciprocity is lacking. In a situation where there is an apparent shortage of functional facilities, trained staff, ICT infrastructure, and sufficient media collections, resource sharing and library management becomes a matter of managing with what is at hand. The ways in which actors at the UR relate to and conceive of resource sharing and library management is also connected to changes in behavior among library users, which in extension has led to changed expectations concerning the work of librarians. The disconnect problem is at the center of this analysis of the talk about and understandings of resource sharing and library management. The two overarching
interpretations seem to be leading to different leadership practices and result in different motives for the involved staff. From a perspective of resource sharing of abundance, staff can potentially engage with the merger enthusiastically. According to such a scenario, librarians will be able to modernize and upgrade the library system and its services. However, with the second interpretation at hand, where resource sharing is a matter of scarcity, it is more a question of surviving when staff is dismissed or a substantial part of the budget is cut. Furthermore, the two interpretations are also likely to lead to different understandings of what constitute necessary practices in libraries.

10.3 Practices of resource sharing and library management

It was stated in the introductory chapter that the term practice as used in this thesis refers to various entangled activities enacted in relation to library work, often with the aim of meeting the interests of different categories of users. An idea fundamental to this study is that practices necessarily must be understood as shaped and characterized by interactions between people, objects and the setting in which the practices are enacted. It has also been asserted, in the theory chapter, that the relationships between the merger context and the practices related to library management, library work, and resource sharing are hard to separate. However, when addressing the second research question concerning what practices related to resource sharing and library management that can be identified at the different libraries of the UR, an approach is employed that still aspires to analytically pinpoint these practices.

The former institutions that now are supposed to be integrated parts of the UR brought into the merger setting their specific traditions and ways of working. As can be seen in the results, the integration of the former institutions have not been fully successful. Consequently, what seemingly appears to be one and the same set of work tasks is conducted in a variety of different ways throughout the library system. Perhaps the most obvious example is the difference between those libraries that are computerized with Internet access and those who are not. Practices of, for example, sharing library collection items (e.g. books and periodicals) can be enacted in radically different ways depending on the availability of networked computers. Registering of bibliographic
records in repositories and databases serves as a mediational mean for access to collections over a distance for those who are connected to the same repositories and databases. In such cases there is a ground for resource sharing according to the ideals of modernization. However, in libraries that are not computer based the same task does not exist or is reduced to the use of a manual, paper-based system. In this sense, it appears that several of the practices, which from the perspective of the centralized management are perceived as general practices occurring throughout the library system, in fact are local, situated practices that differ from one library to another. In the libraries that are not connected to the Internet, sharing of library collection items must take place – if they take place at all – through time-consuming interlibrary loans carried out by delivery vehicles. Hence, resource sharing is in this case mediated by road infrastructure, not IT. This differs from the case described by Rozum and Brassaw (2013) of how IT through the use of a common LMS successfully could facilitate collaboration and resource sharing in the process of a merger of College of Eastern Utah and Utah State University libraries in the USA.

Also the geographically dispersed constitution of the UR and its library system contributes to the variety of practices that can be identified through the empirical data. Examples of practices of resource sharing brought up in the result chapters are when library staff are attending formal and informal meetings where they are discussing and reporting and thereby share resources in the form of competences. Long distances between libraries often inhibit meetings with many participants. Proximity is key to facilitate integration of newcomers in the community as well as the circulation of the expertise among community members (Wenger, 1998). Nevertheless, a number of communities of practice have taken shape throughout the library system. Even though these communities seem to have a shared domain, i.e. library work, they do not necessarily display a common repertoire of resources. The lack of a common repertoire of resources is largely due to the uneven distribution of funding among libraries. As a result, there are several slightly different communities of library practice residing in the UR library system, which, in extension, leads to resource sharing being enacted in many different ways. This is the case both within a given community of practice and across such communities.
However, as can be seen in the results, the lack of formal meetings for library staff inspires them to take own initiatives for engaging informally with peers. Nonetheless, geographical dispersion in itself, as well as the locally developed and situated work practices, contribute to reduced opportunities for interlibrary collaboration. Notably, organizing and planning of work, frequently includes a certain degree of resource sharing, both in terms of competences and staff. Setting communities of practice aside there are a limited number of formal fora for exchange and acquisition of know-how between the UR library communities at different workplaces.

Long geographical distances between libraries and locally shaped ways of conducting library work have consequences also for practices of library management. What appears to be a prominent practice among library directors and managers is, for example, the work that is done in trying to connect the respective libraries’ activities to the university’s overall mission and agenda. In connection to this, there is a lot of effort in trying to establish and maintain a communication channel upwards in the hierarchical organization. In addition to this work, the practice of advocacy is prominent. It is, as the result chapters show, considered as a way to make the library directors’ voice heard at different hierarchical instances including the senior management at the UR. In order to fulfil ambitions of modernization and harmonization of library activities throughout the UR, library directors are trying to maintain a recently established forum in which they meet and work together. However, as reported in the results, this forum is still at a beginning stage. The library directors’ efforts in managing their respective libraries must necessarily be directed both inwards and outwards since they are at the same time occupied with managing their groups of staff and trying to communicate and negotiate the interests of their libraries to the centralized management unit at the UR headquarters.

### 10.4 Problems and challenges to library management

Already in the introductory chapter, it was stated that merging geographically distant and previously autonomous libraries under one centralized organizational system could constitute challenges to library
management. In this section, I address the research question concerning potential problems and challenges to library management faced in the context of the merger, and how these problems relate to the various visions and steering documents.

As showed in the result chapters, the problems and challenges to library management are connected to the context of the merger, the geographically dispersed multi-campus setting in which the practices of library management are enacted. In this context, a range of potential problems emerged. A major problem proved to be the resistance to appreciate that it is necessary to include into one coherent system of libraries, locally shaped, situated practices, which encompass different traditions and routines concerning the services offered, media collections and a variety of library management systems where some are digitized and others manual. This problem is also reflected in the lack of understanding and recognition, which is displayed by a number of influential actors at the UR, of the work that is conducted at the different libraries throughout the system. In addition to this, library staff also experience that representatives of the centralized management could be more committed to library issues than they are. Furthermore, the benefits of economies of scale are perceived by many as overestimated, which tend to result in a generally light attitude towards problems of various kinds.

It stands clear that the merger of the previously independent institutions has been a complicated task requiring a lot of comprehensive coordination and decision-making concerning all layers of the newly formed organization. The results also clearly show that from the perspective of central management, library matters are not perceived as prioritized. In relation to the overarching purpose of merging institutions of higher education and research, libraries are rather seen as peripheral units, which are anticipated to just find their respective places in the organization. That the libraries, like their parent organizations, arise from and are shaped by their specific traditions and their unique locations is thus largely neglected by decision-makers. That the work performed in the respective libraries, as well as the interests and behaviours of the libraries’ user groups differ between one place and another does not seem to be taken into consideration. As a consequence, the merged library system displays a multitude of
different work practices and is characterized by an uneven distribution of facilities, equipment, staff and competences. According to the vision statements and in the rhetoric of the central management, the library system appears as a lucid, modernized entity. A striking example of this is provided by the official library organization chart, which was discussed in chapter seven, where an idealized overview of the library system organization was presented. The chart gives the impression of the library system as homogenous and coherent, structured according to a number of library thematic work units. However, those who work in the respective libraries do not share this impression. From their perspective, the library system, which is hardly visible, is more like a loose and fragmented entity. Library staff, including library directors, therefore tend to emphasize the importance of harmonizing and gathering the libraries that are supposed to constitute the library system.

This disconnection between the expected outcome from the merger and what is going on in the libraries is similar to the tension between the imaginary incentive and the actual outcome in the case of the Finnish library merger studied by Aula and Tienari (2011). According to their study as well as to the present work, the lack of a harmonized working system among libraries in connection to the situated library practices resulted in challenges such as uncertainty and stressful working conditions for the library staff, which in turn, had as a consequence limited services to users (cf. Goldman, 2012; Tienari, Aula, & Aarrevaara, 2016).

During the initial stage of the merger, there was a great sense of excitement among participants. It was expected that the merger would bring with it a range of positive changes. The visions about modernization and the development of state-of-the-art libraries seemed powerful and to a certain extent convincing, but the expectations were gradually turned into disillusion during the merger process. This was largely due to what the library staff perceived as a lack of understanding and recognition of the work conducted at the different libraries. It did not take long before the library staff, including the library directors, perceived themselves as excluded from the overall accomplishment of the UR merger. This sense of exclusion particularly appears in connection to the managements’ treatment of the collective of library staff. In the presentation of the results, there are detailed accounts of
how librarianship is not considered to be a proper profession. This is also reflected in the lack of a recruitment strategy for the libraries. Having the libraries staffed was mainly a matter of placing people there, irrespective of suitable qualifications, knowledge and skills. Decisions concerning staffing of libraries are thus not grounded in the insight that there is a need for well-trained and qualified employees with adequate social and intellectual capacities. As highlighted in the literature review, this is indeed not a new and unique problem (e.g. Cowell, 1980; Sare, et al., 2012).

The lack of recognition and understanding of the profession of librarianship is also mirrored in the centralized management’s general unwillingness to commit to library issues. This problem can be divided into at least three interconnected strands.

First, and as reflected in the previous line of reasoning, concerning the disregard of librarians’ expertise, leadership appeared to have little appreciation of the fundamentals of what constitutes a library, for example in terms of staff, budget, facilities, equipment and information infrastructure (cf. Noh, 2012). Besides, the merger context is an extraordinary situation, which requires special commitment in order to reach the goals formulated in planning documents and visions. As already mentioned, the results show that the UR libraries were at different starting points in terms of infrastructure, resources, capacity and competences of library staff. Therefore, a well-functioning, harmonized and horizontal infrastructure putting these parts in place is crucial for tying the various libraries together.

Second, there needs to be a well-functioning command and control structure in place through which the centralized leadership can govern all of these resources in an efficient way. However, as the results showed, the specific setup of the command and control structure at the UR proved to be inappropriate. Moreover, the senior management appeared not to discuss library related issues, implicitly or explicitly avoiding shouldering that responsibility.

Third, the lack of commitment becomes particularly visible in the eyes of the library staff when visionary rhetoric so clearly differs from what is actually the case. The most striking example of this is when many in
senior management envisioned the library being the core of the University, but without making decisions that result in sufficient funding of the libraries.

Within the merger process, central management appeared to be marked by overestimation of the benefits of economies of scale. There were assumptions that the UR merger could lead to efficient use of resources by pulling apart former institutions in order to reorganize them according to centralized ideas. However, the results showed that the merger process complicated the management of resources located at the different libraries. Several of the participants stated that resources were assigned to places where they were inefficiently used, which illustrates the difficulties in reorganizing and managing resources. The messiness of the merger thus led to complex situations and challenges affecting both performances of staff as well as managerial activities throughout the library system. This aligns with previous research regarding problems of merging geographically dispersed institutions (e.g. Harman and Harman, 2003), particularly in terms of coordination and management of activities (Pinheiro, Charles, & Jones, 2017). Similar problems have also been highlighted in a study of a Norwegian case (Norgård & Skodvin, 2002, p. 81) where it was concluded that besides difficulties of managing campuses at distance, costs also increased and the lack of resources constrained the relations between campuses and the main branch. Like in the current study, there was a lack of visible benefits coming out of economy of scale, contrary to expectations.

10.5 Solutions to problems and challenges

In this section, I address the fourth research question concerning solutions suggested by management and library staff to address the problems and challenges that the libraries face. These are for obvious reasons tightly coupled with the problems and challenges identified in the previous section.

It should be mentioned that there were differences, but also overlaps, between the groups of participants, management and library staff, regarding what is needed to develop the UR libraries. The solutions suggested are grouped into four overarching and interrelated themes. They concern increased awareness and knowledge about library issues,
continuous professional development and education, new and developed ways of doing things, and, finally, investments of various sorts.

Library staff, in particular, are emphasizing the importance of increased awareness and knowledge concerning library matters. They highlight that librarianship must be recognized throughout the university as a profession. They consider the work they do as having a potential to contribute not only directly to the university, but also, in extension, to the development of the country. For achieving this recognition and for meeting present and future needs of qualified librarians in the country, the establishment of an academic department or a school of LIS in Rwanda was suggested. Furthermore, it was highlighted that the role of the UR library system was rethought so that it is seen as a fundamental part of the university rather than a set of peripheral units. Another issue of great importance to the library staff was that library-related differences within the UR library system are recognized, that is, the acknowledgment of libraries functioning and being managed through locally shaped and situated practices.

That there is a need for continuous professional development and education was brought forth by several of the participants. The need for various kinds of training sessions offered to library staff was frequently mentioned. The importance of benchmarking and study visits was also highlighted. Bids concerning digital matters were particularly underscored. For example, it was suggested that the capacity of the librarians should be developed so that they can lead the digital transformation within the university. In relation to this type of suggestion, the need for an upgraded level of digital literacy among library staff was frequently mentioned. There are also examples of how the library staff conceive of their work tasks and duties as possibly extended. For instance, it was stated that the UR libraries could contribute to the training of knowledgeable and informed citizens capable to transform Rwanda into a knowledge-based society.

That new and developed ways of doing things are required for the development of the library system, and, in extension of the UR, was mentioned by several of the participants in the study. These suggested novelties include not only increased competences but also the
embracement of new ways of working, at the local libraries but also across the library system. As have been stated in the result chapters, the need to involve the libraries in the decision-making processes is emphasized. A concrete idea along this line of reasoning is to delegate the power of decision making to library directors. Furthermore, a proper recruitment strategy for the staffing of libraries was suggested. On an overall level, the participants suggest that the concerted library work is harmonized so that it embraces changes and differences in the profession and in education.

Apart from the already mentioned suggestions, a range of different kinds of investments is proposed. An overall increased library budget is called for. It was suggested that if the UR should be investing in libraries, they would not only be empowered but they could thereby also improve facilities and equipment, and develop the competences of library staff. Such an effort was seen as scaling up to meet the requirements expressed in the university’s vision. In order to alleviate different ICT related challenges that are common in the African context, specific emphasis was placed on digital matters. Many participants thus mentioned, for instance, the benefits of continuous training in the use of mobile technologies, mobile devices and social media, which have proved to be efficient in other countries (e.g. Lwoga, 2014; Jain & Akakandelwa, 2016). On this note, almost all participants emphasized the need for a stabilized Internet connection with a sufficient bandwidth.
11 Conclusions and final remarks

In this concluding chapter, I am taking the point of departure in the results and the discussion in order to present the conclusions of the study. The presentation rests on a structure comprising the set of key concepts that have been developed throughout the thesis.

11.1 Conclusions

With reference to the empirical data and to the relative dearth of steering documents and detailed plans concerning the library system after the merger, it stands clear that the merger was initiated without any specific, elaborated preparations for how to deal with the previously independent institutions’ libraries. In hindsight, it thus seems reasonable to assume that the forming of a new, merged library system is made more efficient and smoother if there is a strategic plan in place that can support the work with accomplishing the merger of the libraries into one university library system.

Given the necessary need for such a strategic plan it should also be noted that such a document would benefit by being based upon knowledge about the different libraries and practices ongoing before the merger. Such a plan could envision connections between the different libraries as well as the emergence of an efficient structure for library management.

Nevertheless, from the perspective of the library staff, the merger has been characterized by an overarching problem, which in the thesis is referred to as the disconnect problem. This concept is of a porous character in the sense that it is possible to apply to a range of disconnections playing out in different ways. The perhaps most prominent facet of the disconnect problem refers to the split, distance and tension – the disconnection – between the views and understandings held by those actors who are working in the libraries and those held by decision-makers located at central management. It should, however, be emphasized that it is not only a matter of actors in separate cohorts having different views and opinions about matters; the results show that it is also possible to discern tensions and contradictions within a single category of participants, even in the
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Another, obvious facet of the disconnect problem refers to the geographical dispersion characterizing the UR, which causes spatial disconnections between different locations. These, in turn, risk enhancing differences between libraries as well as between libraries and central management, concerning how library-related issues are talked about, understood and prioritized, and how work practices are organized and enacted. **For libraries that are to be merged into one library system, and that are geographically dispersed and organized according to a hierarchical structure, the identification of the disconnect problem highlights the importance of inclusive and distributed, strategic, collaborative efforts aimed at accomplishing common objectives.**

The identification of the disconnect problem has furthermore shed light on two different sets of assumptions and expectations concerning the situation for the libraries during the merger process and in particular concerning the ways in which libraries should be managed. According to a prominent strand in the empirical data and the results, library management appears as somewhat of a “non-issue”. This is the result of an attitude towards library matters that is based in the assumption that the libraries constitute peripheral entities, with peripheral actors, that can go with the overall flow of the merger of the more central parts of the university system. This approach constitutes an implicit strategy of minimum central managerial interference where the only explicit aim is to oversee budget matters, to restrict expenses.

A contrasting approach to library management, which also is present in the results, is derived from the analysis grounded in sociocultural theory of the practices taking place in the libraries and the context in which these are enacted. These locally shaped practices exhibit substantial variation due to different geographical and historical traditions. The different libraries are therefore different types of institutions and can be recognized and developed as such with a library management approach.
that emphasizes the importance of taking into consideration the libraries’ respective distinctive features and characteristics.

According to such an approach, library management is a task that primarily needs to be handled by those who are working in the libraries. Those in charge must be knowledgeable about the specific practices that characterize librarianship and the work going on in the individual libraries. This relatively high level of autonomy does not mean, however, that each library should be completely independent from the overarching library system. Rather, this approach includes the idea of library management as a practice that can be more or less delegated. There are thus two contrasting and competing approaches in play at the UR concerning library management. To attain a sustainable merger of libraries into a coherent library system, which is open to context-related differences, a predisposed, unified approach to library management is necessary.

Related to the matter of library management is the issue of decision-making. The results show that decision making concerning libraries at the UR is viewed in roughly speaking two radically different ways. It is either viewed as something that can be executed according to a command and control principle, or as something that to a greater extent than is the case ought to be delegated and distributed over the respective libraries, assigned to the library directors (or those actors who are in charge locally). The command and control principle seems to be grounded in the urgent ideals of modernization, which can be traced to the overall vision of the UR. The contrasting delegation approach, on the other hand, takes into consideration the multi-contextual character of the library system and calls for harmonization as a means to reach modernization. According to the delegation approach, library management needs to be taken out of the non-issue area and made into a core issue for decision-making. The command and control principle’s strong position at the UR can be related to the relative dearth of well-established communication channels in which library matters collaboratively can be discussed and decided upon. To accomplish a successful merger of previously independent academic libraries, a platform accessible to both staff and management, which allows for practice-based, informed decisions to be discussed and made, needs to be in place.
Even though it is not always explicitly stated in the empirical data, it appears throughout the thesis that resource sharing is widely envisioned and employed as a strategy for advancing library matters. This strategy, however, tends to be conceived and presented in different ways depending on the position of the strategist. When the point of departure is the ideas underpinning the central management’s overall merger strategy, i.e. economy of scale, which dictates that bigger is going to be better, resource sharing is conceived as a practice going on in a setting characterized by an abundance of resources. This conception of resource sharing stands in contrast to the one, which is grounded in ideas that set light on locally and historically shaped, situated practices of library work and library use. From this perspective, resource sharing is a practice that is necessitated by a general scarcity of resources. As has been highlighted previously in the thesis, these two approaches to resource sharing cannot only be related to the disconnect problem in general, but specifically to the two overarching strategies for managing the merger of the libraries. Closely related to the notion of resource sharing in a setting thought to be characterized by abundance is a strong focus on modernization. When resource sharing is perceived as a necessity for managing scarcity, focus is set on harmonization. **A concept and a practice that is central to all involved actors can thus be interpreted and used in different ways. This implies that when libraries are to merge, the involved actors need to in advance reach a common understanding concerning concepts and practices that are deemed to be central to the merger.**

It was highlighted in the discussion chapter that the respective strategies of modernization and harmonization also can be associated with two basic attitudes to library work and matters related to the libraries within the merger: pessimism and optimism. Towards the end of the period during which the empirical data was produced, several participants, especially among the library staff, expressed that they experienced a certain sense of fatigue towards the merger. The merger was thus described in the results as an “endless process” that disturbed existing practices and brought along with it uncertainty and ambiguity among the staff. This is an expression of an attitude that can be described in terms of pessimism. Even though expectations concerning the creation of a modern library system were high among most of the participants when the merger started, throughout the process many started to
gradually lose their hope as time went by without expected positive changes taking place. A sense of optimism was thus for many replaced by pessimism, not least for those in the library staff that without being told about it in advance or with short notice were informed that they had to relocate from one library to another. A general conclusion that can be drawn from this is that during a merger, which is likely to cause challenging changes of various kinds, the staff needs to be handled with great care and offered stable working conditions including timely information about future changes.

When taking into consideration all the six conclusions presented above, it turns out that what has been termed the disconnect problem has infused the whole project of merging the previously independent libraries into one university library system. In a metaphorical manner, it can be suggested that what has indeed been disconnected are the two overarching ways in which the UR library system has been conceived. Different actors seem to have been using different maps for navigating the delicate matter of the library merger. The UR library system has either been seen as a somewhat blurred map without sharp contours or depicted as a detailed description of a dispersed, heterogeneous landscape consisting of a multitude of historically shaped, situated and context-bound, individual library units.

11.2 Contributions

This thesis reports the first study in Rwanda in the discipline of library and information science. The thesis has elucidated an important process during a historical period, the creation of a unified library system during the merger of the UR. In addition, the thesis sheds light on not only the profession of librarianship, which thus far has been unexplored in the Rwandan context, but also on the far-reaching potential of libraries in educational institutions. Regarding societal relevance, the thesis is, furthermore, likely to be of interest to other government-run institutions requiring library and information services.

From an empirical perspective, the thesis contributes with new knowledge concerning the topic of mergers of academic libraries. The insights presented in the thesis are thus likely to benefit actors who are in the process of merging previously independent libraries into a unified
library system. The thesis should be of particular interest to higher education institutions that are located in an African context or other so-called developing countries, and where the implementation and distribution of information and communication technologies is in its infancy. With its specific focus on library management and resource sharing, the thesis should be attractive to readers in managerial positions of academic libraries. On a more general note but still concerning the empirical contribution, the thesis should also attract readers who are interested in the interplay between, on the one hand, steering documents and visions and, on the other hand, practices of library work, decision-making, and management.

The empirical work in connection to this study has been conducted with a double focus on practices taking place in and around libraries, and on the development and organization of the library system as a whole. In particular, for analyzing and discussing the overall perspective of the library merger, a set of concepts has been developed and introduced. This conceptual toolbox constitutes a crucial part of the thesis’ theoretical contribution.

The notion of the disconnect problem has proven useful for elucidating and discussing a number of different tensions and distances appearing in the empirical object. This concept ought to have the potential to be fruitfully employed and made use of in other studies aimed at exploring actors during organizational changes. Concerning the more specific study object of how resources were shared (or not) during the merger and of how this practice have been conceived by different actors, the dichotomy resource sharing in abundance versus resource sharing in scarcity has been useful. This dichotomy is likely to be applicable also in other studies that serve to explore how common resources are being managed and made use of.

The overarching theoretical perspective was grounded in sociocultural theory. In comparison to several other contributions to the discipline of library and information science, which have explored various information-related practices from a close-up, sociocultural perspective, this thesis presents a somewhat different way of applying sociocultural theory. It has mainly served as an overarching, theoretical compass where a limited selection of established theoretical concepts
have been used to emphasize the situated and collaborative dimensions of the study object as well as for highlighting what possibly enable or constrain practices. The application of this theoretical frame in combination with the analytical concepts developed from the empirical data can be viewed as an innovative contribution.

Finally, it should be highlighted that this thesis is the result of a study that partly was conducted from an insiders’ perspective. Being the first of its kind is not only a matter of presenting the first doctoral study in library and information science in Rwanda. It is also a matter of contributing to and strengthening the belief in the Rwandan library field.

11.3 Further research

A research study with its particular design, theoretical perspective and selection of participants, could always have been conducted in a different way. The study presented in this thesis is the result of my specific decisions concerning what appeared to be worth looking into at the specific time the study was conducted. The study could accordingly have been conducted in several other ways, with other methods, other theories, and other participants.

In what follows, I begin by presenting ideas for further research on the empirical object that this thesis has dealt with. Thereafter, the perspective is somewhat widened through a set of suggestions for research that could be conducted on related issues, but in other empirical settings.

The period during which the study was conducted, started at an early stage of the merger. It was a time of particular interest to study the merger since it was at that stage far from stabilized and the people involved knew less than they do today about the ways in which the merger would develop. The dimension of time thus brings an interesting layer to the empirical object. Instead of being in the midst of the merger process, which was the case for the present study, future work could look into the ways in which library work, including management and resource sharing, have changed over time with the merger.
The actors at the centre of the present study consist of library staff and representatives for central management. A group of stakeholders that are missing from the present study, but who are likely to contribute relevant input, are library users of various kinds, students as well as teachers and researchers. If future work aspires to address the question of how the merger has turned out, this group of stakeholders ought to be included as study participants.

The notion of power is seeping through the present work, but does not constitute the prime focus of the study. An organisational setting like the UR, with its geographically distributed and hierarchical structure, is probably a highly suitable object for analyses oriented toward power issues. If a fair amount of steering documents, policies and other central documents concerning the UR library system was retrieved and focused on, some sort of discursively oriented study would be rewarding to conduct.

A figure of speech frequently occurring in the empirical data used for the present study is “the modern research university”. For several of the study participants, it appears to stand as a role model for the UR. A common way of measuring success in the world of academia is that of numbers of publications and citations. A bibliometric study could have complemented the present, qualitative study by mapping the publication and citation landscape in which the UR strives to be successful. The result of this mapping could then have been analysed in concert with the qualitative empirical data.

As mentioned in the previous section of this chapter, one of the contributions offered by the thesis consist of a set of theoretically infused concepts. Both the “disconnect problem” and the dichotomy of resource sharing in abundance versus resource sharing in scarcity deserve to be employed in studies set in different empirical settings. It is a common theme in qualitative studies of organized activities to explore tensions of various kinds. The notion of the “disconnect problem” can support formulation of research problems in such future studies. It can furthermore be adopted by a range of library and information studies that pertain to settings in which (documented) visions of various kinds are at the core.
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Invitation letter to participants

[Date]

Invitation to participate in a research project

Dear,

My name is Berthilde Uwamwezi. I am a doctoral student at the Swedish School of Library and Information Science, University of Borås (SSLIS). I am undertaking a doctoral project on collaboration and resource sharing among libraries in the context of the ongoing merger of the University of Rwanda. With this letter, I contact you as one of the members of UR, to invite you to participate in this research and be interviewed in my empirical study. I hope to be able to interview you at your workplace in a time and location that suit you.

My main interest at this stage of the project is what matters and what factors that are of importance in relation to resource sharing in the context of the ongoing merger. I strongly believe that your participation is an important contribution when elucidating this issue.

The interview will last approximately forty-five (45) minutes, probably not more than one hour. My plan is to make sound recordings of the interviews. The recordings will be listened to only by me, which means that as a participant in this study you are granted full confidentiality. The interview will be done in English, or Kinyarwanda or French if preferred.

Best regards,

Berhilde Uwamwezi
Email: berthilde.uwamwezi@hb.se, Phone: […]
This project is carried out within a frame of collaboration between Rwanda and Sweden under the UR-Sweden Programme for Research and Institutional Advancement. My supervisors are Professor Jan Nolin and Dr Ola Pilerot from SSLIS, and Dr Ruth Nalumaga from Makerere University in Uganda. The following are full contacts details for my supervisors: Professor Jan Nolin, e-mail: jan.nolin@hb.se, phone: […]; Dr. Ola Pilerot, e-mail: ola.pilerot@hb.se, phone: […]; and Dr. Ruth Nalumaga, e-mail: relnalumaga@mulib.mak.ac.ug.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with me if there is anything that you wonder about. I will happily provide you with further information about the project.

Best regards,

Berhilde Uwamwezi

Email: berthilde.uwamwezi@hb.se,

Phone: […]
## Appendix 2: Informed consent form

**Informed consent form**

*Research project: “Mergers and sharing: an investigation into collaboration between libraries at the University of Rwanda (UR)”.* Researcher: Berthilde Uwamwezi.

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick box as appropriate):

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<td>1.</td>
<td>I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided in the Invitation letter dated ________________.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I understand that I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and without being questioned on why I have withdrawn.</td>
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| 5. | I agree to comply with the following procedures regarding confidentiality:  
- My name will not appear in any publications produced on the basis of the data gathered during the interview  
- The researcher will anonymize all the participants in the study, which grants me full confidentiality  
- The researcher will transcribe the audio-recording of the interview and is given the right to quote from the transcription  
- I will be given the opportunity to read and provide feedback on the transcribed interview | ☐ |
| 6. | It has been explained to me that the data gathered by the researcher during the interview will be used for the production of the researcher’s doctoral dissertation. | ☐ |
| 7. | I understand that the researcher’s supervisors will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms that are specified in this form. | ☐ |
| 8. | Along with the Researcher, I agree to sign and date this informed consent form. | ☐ |

---

Participant: ___________________  
Name of Participant, date ____________

Researcher: ___________________  
Name of Researcher, date ____________

Signature

304
Appendix 2: Informed consent form

Research project: “Mergers and sharing: an investigation into collaboration between libraries at the University of Rwanda (UR)”. 

Researcher: Berthilde Uwamwezi.

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick box as appropriate):

1. I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided in the Invitation letter dated ________________.

2. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.

3. I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.

4. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and without being questioned on why I have withdrawn.

5. I agree to comply with the following procedures regarding confidentiality:
   - My name will not appear in any publications produced on the basis of the data gathered during the interview
   - The researcher will anonymize all the participants in the study, which grants me full confidentiality
   - The researcher will transcribe the audio-recording of the interview and is given the right to quote from the transcription
   - I will be given the opportunity to read and provide feedback on the transcribed interview

6. It has been explained to me that the data gathered by the researcher during the interview will be used for the production of the researcher's doctoral dissertation.

7. I understand that the researcher's supervisors will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms that are specified in this form.

8. Along with the Researcher, I agree to sign and date this informed consent form.

Participant:

___________________________
Name of Participant, date   Signature

Researcher:

___________________________
Name of Researcher, date   Signature
Appendix 3: Research certificate from the UR

June 5th, 2015

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that Mrs. Berthilde Uwamwezi bearing is a Ph.D. student at the Swedish School of Library and Information Sciences in the University of Boras in Sweden. Mrs. Uwamwezi is also a member of staff in the College of Business and Economics of the University of Rwanda. She is currently in the process of gathering data for her Ph.D. research work with the title: ‘Mergers and Sharing: An Investigation into Collaboration between Libraries at the University of Rwanda.’ Mrs. Uwamwezi will be approaching you with the aim of collecting relevant information to complete her Ph.D. dissertation. We request that you kindly extend all necessary cooperation by providing the needed data.

Do please feel free to contact the Directorate of Research and Postgraduate Studies of the College of Business and Economic should you be in need of further clarification regarding the research project.

We thank you very much in anticipation of your kind cooperation.

Sincerely,

Chika Ezere Ph.D.,
Director of Research and Postgraduate studies
University of Rwanda-College of Business and Economics
www.ur.ac.rw
ezeere@affec.rw
0784729666

Tel. (+250) 252574302 P.O. Box: 1514 Kigali WEBSITE: www.ur.ac.rw
Certificate for empirical work in relation to doctoral studies

To whom it may concern,

This is to certify that Bertheilde Uwamwezi is appointed as a PhD student at the Swedish School of Library and Information Science (SSLIS).

SSLIS constitutes one of the largest library and information science research environments in Scandinavia and is a leader in a number of specialized research fields. SSLIS is the Swedish partner of the library subproject funded by SIDA and engaged in various activities including two PhD projects. Uwamwezi is enrolled in a four-year PhD program which consists of both coursework and supervisor assisted development of a PhD thesis.

SSLIS has granted Uwamwezi full responsibility to conduct interviews in accordance with the needs of her dissertation work. Data collection will mainly be conducted through interviews with purposefully selected study participants. All participants recruited for the study are guaranteed full confidentiality.

I strongly recommend that she is given permission to conduct interviews with suitable study participants. The results of the findings of the study that she is working on will eventually benefit the development of University of Rwanda.

Sincerely,

Jan Nolin, professor
Research leader SSLIS
PhD supervisor

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<tr>
<td>University of Borås</td>
<td>Alégazan 1</td>
<td>46-33-435 40 60 (switchboard)</td>
<td>46-435 40 05</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Jan.Nolin@hh.se">Jan.Nolin@hh.se</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.hh.se/bhs/bhs-eng/">http://www.hh.se/bhs/bhs-eng/</a></td>
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Appendix 5: Interview guide

Background

- Can you tell me about yourself, your professional and educational background?
- For how long have you been working at the UR?

Libraries

- According to you, which are the roles of the academic library in achieving the University’s mission?
- In which situations and in which ways do you and your colleagues discuss collaboration with the other UR libraries?
- Can you describe a typical workday, what do you do (ask for examples)?
- Where, in what place (s) are you typically when you work?
- If you are free to imagine the ideal library, what would it be like?
- What do you do in order to achieve this ideal library?
- What stops you from doing it? Probe to have specific /clear answers. What for examples, what else…

UR libraries in the merger

- What can you and your colleagues do in order to develop advantages out of the merger?
- What are you and your colleagues doing that are creating problems/difficulties regarding the merger? What can be done about that?

*If the interviewee doesn’t mention by him/herself aspects concerning staff, competencies, equipment, housing, infrastructure, etc. ask the following question:*
In the context of the merger, what do you find important to take into consideration regarding the structure of the newly formed UR library?

Be prepared to follow up by mentioning (if the director doesn’t do it himself/herself) aspects such as levels, units, leadership, and organization in general.

- What is your opinion/understanding/perception regarding how the library (ies) should be organized?
- What do you do in order to realize this?
- Would you say that you are part of a kind of network in which you discuss issues related to libraries? (If yes ask the following question)

- Do you talk to other library directors?
- Is the merger a big issue when in contact with others?
- What in your daily activities reminds you of the merger? (ask for specific examples)
- We have been talking about the issue of merger, now is there anything that we haven’t covered regarding this issue that you would like to say something about?

Resources

- When we are talking about resources in relation to the library, what would you say that they are?
- What do you and your colleagues do in order to enable access to these resources?
- Do you and your colleagues discuss the issue of these resources?

Resource sharing

- According to you, what is resource sharing?
- What can be shared by libraries in terms of resources according to you?

If he or she does not come up with anything here, you could be prepared to present some suggestions, e.g. collections, people, financial resources, IT system, infrastructure, other facilities....
• Do you see resource sharing as an important feature in the merger process?
• What do you do in order to achieve resource sharing?
• What do you plan to do?
• How do you discuss resource sharing with colleagues?
• Which issues appear and how are these discussed?
• What can you and your colleagues do in order to address the issue of resource sharing?
• What are the conflicts involved?
• How are these dealt with?
• What do you think can contribute to hamper resources sharing?

(Probe and ask for details and clarifications)

• What would you like to do if there is something that is perceived as not possible to do in this regards?
• Is there anything that we have not talked about that you expected us to talk about?
• If yes, what is that?

Thank you for your participation!
Do you see resource sharing as an important feature in the merger process?

What do you do in order to achieve resource sharing?

What do you plan to do?

How do you discuss resource sharing with colleagues?

Which issues appear and how are these discussed?

What can you and your colleagues do in order to address the issue of resource sharing?

What are the conflicts involved?

How are these dealt with?

What do you think can contribute to hamper resource sharing?

(Probe and ask for details and clarifications)

What would you like to do if there is something that is perceived as not possible to do in this regards?

Is there anything that we have not talked about that you expected us to talk about?

If yes, what is that?

Thank you for your participation!


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