Do we need a doctor in the library?
Perceptions of librarians and managers in Ireland:
A Phenomenographic study

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work.

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Eva Hornung
Summary

Higher Education in Ireland has seen a record number of students enrolled in doctoral programmes. Increasingly, library and information professionals hold doctorates, too. There is a presumption that having a PhD is a positive addition to the workplace, but does it really make a difference to the service librarians provide in their respective organisations? And what is the role of the doctorate in the library?

The literature review looked at international research in Library and Information Studies (LIS). It focused on the place of the LIS PhD in academia; its position within library services; research training of librarians; service provision in libraries for researchers; and the views of library patrons. No research had been uncovered dealing with the space of the doctorate in Irish libraries.

The present Phenomenographic study explored the perceptions of ten librarians with doctorates and ten library managers, who employed information professionals with PhDs. Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews with each individual following two different interview schedules. Additionally, a focus group of four experienced librarians, who do not hold a doctorate themselves, but are currently working (or have done so in the past) with colleagues who do, was held. All interviews and the focus group discussion were transcribed. Framework analysis aided the researcher with the analysis of data. A step-by-step account of same was provided.

The findings revealed three different conceptions and four dimensions of variation, which are themes that are evident across the categories, for each cohort of interviewees, forming two so-called outcome spaces.
Unexpectedly, these two overlapped to a certain extent, which allowed the researcher to draw up vignettes outlining how the role of doctorate was experienced in these three distinct ways: ‘providing a better service’, ‘being an expert’ and ‘developing as a person’. The data collected from the focus group participants broadly confirmed these results.

The discussion chapter juxtaposed these results with the findings in the wider literature. Advantages and disadvantages of the PhD in the library were examined ranging from impact on personal relationships to improved library services. Contrasting views on the value of the skills of practising librarians and of those gained by librarians through the PhD were also appraised. The section concluded with a summary of the place of subject based doctorates in the library and misconceptions about the PhD process.

Concluding the thesis, some general observations and recommendations for policy and practice were made, including how to support PhD candidates and attract more students to doctoral research. The status of the LIS PhD in Ireland in general emerged as a potential focus for future research.
Acknowledgements

Librarians and library managers are busy people, but they still found the time to share their experiences and feelings with me. Thank you to all of you. What a great profession to be part of.

A huge thank you to Dr. Michelle Share, my supervisor, who guided me calmly through the different steps and introduced me to Framework Analysis.

My fellow travellers through the PostGrad and Master jungle – you are a great bunch, thanks for your friendship.

Thank you to my friend, Frau Mag. Beatrix Aigner, for proofreading (yet again, sorry). I'm hoping to inspire the next generation of learners, my nephews Moritz and Robin.

And, as always, to the rest of my fantastic family and friends, who had to listen to yet more research stories and offer so much moral (and culinary) support... this is the last academic degree, I promise*

*possibly.

Dedicated to absent family and friends. And the cats who keep me sane.
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<tr>
<td>CAPAL</td>
<td>Canadian Association of Professional Librarians</td>
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<tr>
<td>CILIP</td>
<td>Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuing Professional Development</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Central Statistics Office</td>
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<td>CURL</td>
<td>Consortium of Research Libraries</td>
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<td>DBS</td>
<td>Dublin Business School</td>
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<tr>
<td>EBL</td>
<td>Evidence-Based Librarianship</td>
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<tr>
<td>EdD</td>
<td>Doctor in Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>E. H.</td>
<td>Eva Hornung</td>
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<tr>
<td>EUCLID</td>
<td>European Association for Library &amp; Information Education and Research</td>
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<td>IFLA</td>
<td>International Federation of Library Associations</td>
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<td>LAI</td>
<td>Library Association of Ireland</td>
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<td>LIS</td>
<td>Library and Information Studies</td>
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<td>MLIS</td>
<td>Master in Library and Information Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Master of Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Professional Doctorate</td>
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PhD  philosophiae doctorem or doctorem philosophiae [Latin], meaning Doctor of Philosophy

PKSB  Professional Skills and Knowledge Base

QQI  Quality and Qualifications Ireland

RIN  Research Information Network

RLUK  Research Libraries UK

UCD  University College Dublin (National University of Ireland)

UK  United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the thesis

Library and Information Studies (LIS) encompasses a vast body of knowledge which forms the foundation on which the library community relies in order to provide an effective and efficient service to its stakeholders. In recent years many librarians\(^1\) have engaged in advanced academic research by pursuing a doctorate (either a professional doctorate or a PhD), but there is hardly any debate about how their additional qualifications impact on the services they provide. Anecdotal evidence suggests that librarians are aware of the potential advantages for themselves and their respective organisations, but to date no research has been published in Ireland.

This thesis will explore the perceptions of the impact of the PhD\(^2\) with library and information professionals in Ireland, who have completed their studies. Both traditional PhDs and professional doctorates (PD) will be considered as many subject librarians tend to opt for advanced degrees in disciplines other than LIS (Lindquist & Gilman, 2008; Gilman & Lindquist, 2010). This exploratory project will “…search for a deeper understanding of the participants’ lived experiences of the phenomenon under study” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 55). Their conceptions will be compared to those who employ librarians, i.e. library managers.

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\(^1\) I will use ‘librarian’ and ‘information professional’ synonymously, both denoting qualified staff.

\(^2\) The words “PhD” and “doctorate” will be used interchangeably, meaning both a traditional PhD and a professional doctorate.
Additionally, this study will also include data from a focus group conducted with experienced librarians, who do not currently hold a doctorate, but who are working or have worked in the past with colleagues who do. The insights gained will create a more complete picture of what the place of the PhD is in Irish libraries today.

1.2 Significance to policy, practice and theory

The profession could benefit from having more LIS staff with doctorates. Freeman (1995) predicted a

…rise in public esteem and ‘street credibility’ of LIS practitioners generally if many of them possessed doctorates. It can do little harm to the profession if it is perceived to be striving for the highest academic and professional standards among its members (p. 27).

In academic libraries, the emphasis is on providing a quality student experience that encourages more people to take up advanced studies. One of the current key priorities of the Irish Government for the Higher Education sector is

providing a strong talent pipeline combining knowledge, skills & employability which responds effectively to the needs of our enterprise, public service and community sectors, both nationally and regionally, and maintains Irish leadership in Europe for skill availability (Department of Education and Skills, 2018:24).

This rather utilitarian view of higher education corresponds with the notion of the ‘knowledge economy’, which holds that knowledge is a commodity that can be capitalised on. Post-graduate students are one such group affected by this outlook, but as Loxley and Seery (2012) have found in their study involving 27 professional doctoral students, scholarship for its own sake was still the main driver for this cohort of mature professionals.
Librarians clearly have a role to play in doctoral education. They are becoming more engaged in teaching research skills and in partnering academics in conducting studies. These activities in turn shape the perception of students and academics of the library and its services. Librarians who can offer this peer-level support help strengthen relationships (Warren, 2018) and therefore secure the survival of the library into the future. Scholarship, including the dissemination and publication of research, is now part of the day job for many academic librarians (Hoffmann, Berg, & Koufogiannakis, 2017).

Evidence-based Librarianship (EBL) allows librarians to become practitioner-researchers and aims at bridging the perceived research-practice gap (Wilson, 2013). The EBL movement in particular has attracted widespread interest across the library world, including public and special libraries, who, traditionally, would not have considered research as a tool to investigate everyday problems. The overall renewed interest in advanced research qualifications stems to a certain extent from EBL.

### 1.3 Background and rationale

The interest in this topic was formed by my own professional and academic background. After qualifying as a librarian in 1995, I have worked in information settings ever since, currently as the librarian in a one-person special educational library in Dublin. Additionally, I am a qualified researcher after completing a part-time PhD in Information Studies (Hornung, 2010) which looked at solo librarians’ perceptions of continuing professional development (CPD). I am also actively engaged in two professional associations, the Library Association of Ireland (LAI) and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP).
These circumstances put me into a unique position of being a practitioner, but also an academic, even though my current position is considered a non-academic job. Over the years, and especially since completing the PhD, I have received quite a few inquiries from colleagues interested in pursuing a doctorate, some of whom went on to enrol. Debates within the LAI community also sometimes lead to questions on further academic qualifications for practising librarians, many (perhaps most) of whom already hold a Master in Library and Information Studies (MLIS). Inevitably, the need to do a PhD comes up. But does this highest of academic qualifications actually make a difference in the day-to-day running of an information service?

1.4 Overview of current LIS qualifications

To position the PhD in the landscape of LIS qualifications, this section will outline what is currently available in the field (for a synopsis of historic developments in professional education for public library staff see Ellis King, 2008). There are three schools on the island of Ireland offering academic qualifications in Library and Information Studies/Management, and two of those facilitate doctoral studies in LIS.

1.4.1 University College Dublin

University College Dublin (UCD) launched its ‘Diploma in Library Training’ in 1928. This underwent many restructuring processes, and in the 1980s, was followed by both academic (MA, MLitt, PhD) and professional (MLIS) degree programmes (Traxler-Brown, 2009). The MLIS and Graduate Diploma are accredited by the LAI, and there a few more part- and full-time Master, Diploma and Certificate courses on offer as well, some of which can be taken for uncredited CPD purposes (Shankar, 2016).
In its current form, the ‘Doctor of Philosophy in Information and Communication Studies’, requires applicants to have a primary degree in any field of study and a Master’s degree in information science, library science, communication studies, computer science or a related field (UCD School of Information and Communication Studies, 2018). A five-credit module on ‘PhD Skills’ was designed to allow PhD candidates to develop additional skills “…by offering students the ability to plan their research, guest lecture effectively, develop academic writing skills, complete presentations and get the most out of academic conferences.” (University College Dublin, 2019).

Twelve doctorates in this subject area are listed in UCD library’s research depository. None of these PhD holders currently works as a librarian (I either know them personally or have gained this information from colleagues): four are in academic positions, two are retired academics, one is a retired nursing educator, four are researchers, and one works as a self-employed consultant abroad.

1.4.2 Dublin Business School

The Master of Science (MSc) in Information and Library Management can be taken on a full-time or part-time basis and is also accredited by the LAI. Individual modules are available for librarians interested in CPD and have been mapped to CILIP’s Professional Skills and Knowledge Base (PKSB) (O’Neill, 2016). The PKSB outlines the range of skills and competencies required in library and information management (O’Neill, 2015). DBS at present does not offer a PhD in LIS.
1.4.3 Ulster University

Arising out of the postgraduate certificate in school library management, the University of Ulster developed a Library and Information Management programme offered at Certificate, Diploma and Master's level, all accredited by CILIP. Since 2016, the course is fully online. The School also offers part- and full-time PhDs (Bates, 2016). They have two PhD graduates (one currently works as a research consultant, one as a librarian), with one more thesis to be submitted in autumn 2019 and a fourth PhD just commenced (Bates, personal communication, July, 1, 2019). These are, however, PhDs in Education, not LIS.

Many more Irish students avail of online, part-time or full-time degrees offered by universities in Britain, often enrolled in a remote capacity. So how many of these PhD holders work in Irish libraries?

1.5 PhD holders in Irish libraries

In LIS, statistical information on employment figures is hard to come by, which is quite ironic for a profession that deals with information and knowledge. Internationally, the data is patchy. The International Federation of Library Association (IFLA), the umbrella organisation for all library associations in the world, has initiated a 'Library Map of the World' (International Federation of Library Associations, n.d.). This is a country-by-country survey containing basic information on units of media per type of library and how many people are employed in them, but not what qualifications they hold. Ireland has submitted some data, mainly for the academic and public library sectors, but special libraries, due to their fragmented nature, are not recorded.
Therefore, the most reliable source of information for the sampling frame will be the census, conducted by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in Ireland. According to the latest version, taken in 2016, 1,777 people in Ireland identified as 'librarians' (Central Statistics Office, n.d., a).

Table 1.1. Number of librarians in Ireland

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<th>Librarians Both sexes</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2016</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total - At work (Number)</td>
<td>1,707</td>
<td>1,777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At work - employees (Number)</td>
<td>1,670</td>
<td>1,716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed, with paid employees (Number)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed, without paid employees (Number)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At work - assisting relative (Number)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
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In 2016, 110 persons working in libraries, archives, museums and other cultural activities possessed a doctorate (Central Statistics Office, n.d., b).

No number can be extracted for 'librarians' alone, but advanced research degrees have clearly been on the increase across these professions (sometimes referred to as the GLAM (Gallery, Library, Archive, Museum) sector).

Table 1.2. GLAM sector employees with doctorates
This study will engage a sub section of this population, and, therefore, no generalisation can be made. Since this is a qualitative study, this would not be an issue. The other caveat is that there is no certainty of accuracy because the census is based on self-reported data. Again, these figures just serve to give an overview of the potential number of PhD holders in the library world. Even if all of the 110 people with doctorates worked in libraries, they would only constitute approximately a 10% of the librarian workforce (not taking into account ‘library assistants’, which is a separate professional grade). The actual percentage is evidently even smaller.

1.6 Research in Ireland to date

The doctoral theses from both library schools at UCD and the University of Ulster so far tend to fall into three areas: information behaviour, information needs and management; information technology related themes; and special collections. These topics are in line with most of what has been published in the LIS literature in Ireland so far. An exception is the dissertation by John Mullins, which looked at perceptions of leadership in public libraries, and was awarded a PhD in Business Studies by University College Cork (Mullins, 2004).

The literature on research conducted by information professionals is sparse and most of it, unsurprisingly, zooms in on academic librarians. One recent review, based on a survey of library staff in 21 Higher Education Institutions, revealed a link between educational attainment and likelihood of having published, with 92% of those who did publish having level 9 or level 10 (doctorate) qualifications (O’Brien & Cronin, 2016).
A recent study by Delaney and Bates (2018), which did look specifically at the library needs of doctoral students, found that library training was well attended, but that academic writing classes and courses on using web 2.0 technologies for research were needed.

Other Irish publications were centred on professional identity and new roles. Antonesa (2007) contemplated how library employers seem to be looking for more generic, rather than traditional librarian skills, and identified information literacy as a field for engagement. Kavanagh (2009) reflected on her own organisation and the changing role of assistant librarians there. She highlighted their increased responsibilities regarding teaching and how they learned new pedagogical skills.

1.7 Research aim and research questions

1.7.1 Research aim

To explore the value of holding a doctorate (PhD or professional doctorate) to information professionals in Ireland and to the services they provide. This was broken down into two specific research questions:

1.7.2 Research questions

- What are the perceptions of librarians and employers of the value of having a doctorate?
- How does having a doctorate impact on library services?
Ten librarians who held doctorates and ten library employers were interviewed individually, and their data was complemented by a focus group of qualified information professionals, who were colleagues of library workers with PhDs.

1.8 Overview of the thesis

Chapter 2 provides an analysis of the literature reviewed. There are four parts to it: general research on the PhD in LIS; its place in academia; the use of doctorates in the library workplace; and current service provision in libraries, including the view of library users.

Chapter 3 introduces Phenomenography, the qualitative research approach selected. Deriving from its theoretical stance, which sees experiences and perceptions in a non-dual light (meaning that there is only one world, the one we live in), data collection takes the form of semi-structured interviews and focus groups. By asking people directly about their understanding, it is hoped this will elicit meaningful conceptions.

Chapter 4 looks at the findings in detail, outlining the different ways in which librarians, their colleagues and managers perceive of the role of the PhD. It juxtaposes these conceptions and draws out how each of them influences service provision.

These results are discussed and reviewed in light of outcomes of other research studies in Chapter 5. Bringing it all together in Chapter 6, the conclusion summarises the thesis, makes recommendations for policy and practice, and proposes some avenues for further research.
2. Literature review

2.1 Overview of chapter

This chapter introduces some of the studies published in other countries, as to date there is no Irish publication looking specifically at the role of the doctorate in libraries.

The review is split into four parts: firstly, it gives a short overview of some general research on the PhD in LIS; secondly, it examines studies on the PhD’s place in academia; thirdly, it analyses research on its use in the library workplace, including research training by librarians; and fourthly, it will survey publications on service provision in libraries and the perspectives of library patrons. The chapter finishes with a short summary.

2.2 PhD in Library and Information Studies

PhDs in Librarianship have existed for nearly a century. In the United States, the University of Chicago established a doctoral programme in LIS in 1928 (Abrera, 1987). Reviews of this highest of qualifications have also been available for a number of decades, e.g. Carpenter and Carpenter’s (1970) study on LIS doctoral graduates and their views on library education. Other US based researchers include Franklin and Jaeger (2007), Klingler (2007), and Shu, Larivière, Mongeon, Julien and Piper (2016). Several other countries and regions were also examined by scholars: e.g Nordic countries (Tveit, 2017); Australia (Macauley, Evans, & Pearson, 2010) and Pakistan (Samdani & Bhatti, 2011; Sheikh & Jan, 2017).
All of these studies mainly compiled lists of what type of research topics had been investigated, information on the universities themselves and characteristics of PhD students. They implemented a mix of document reviews and surveys.

Further literature focussed on personal experiences of doing a doctorate. Ferrari (2007) questioned fellow art librarians on their decision processes regarding obtaining a PhD. McCluskey Dean (2017) reflected on her own journey as a librarian pursuing a professional doctorate. Other authors’ works applied a more conversational tone advising potential students on how to complete a doctorate (e.g. Barron, 2014; Deconinck, 2015) or were entirely based on interviews with students (Salmon, 1992). None of these researchers looked at how doctorates impacted on the information work place.

2.3 The place of the doctorate in LIS academia

LIS has always been a multidisciplinary field of study. From the 1960s to the late 1980s, the PhD in LIS was the most common qualification for library school faculty members across the United States (Kilpela, 1982). In a survey in the mid-70s, which included deans of all accredited library schools, none of the respondents actively recruited other subject PhDs (Miller, 1976). Yet towards the last decades of the 20th century, many of the academics working in LIS had non-LIS doctorates (Weech & Pluzhenskaia, 2005). A shift had clearly happened in the intervening years.

This seeming ‘replacement’ filtered down to potential graduate intake. In the 1990s there were concerns with the lack of PhD students in LIS as expressed by deans and directors of LIS schools. They recommended identifying and targeting their best Master students and offering them faculty support and mentoring (Reeling, 1992).
Uptake of PhD research amongst librarians is uneven across the globe and other countries reported similar difficulties. Australia experienced very low numbers of LIS PhDs and an under-supply of PhD-trained academics, thus producing not enough LIS-related research knowledge (Macauley, Evans, & Pearson, 2010). In Pakistan, Haider and Mahmood (2007) lamented a lack of encouragement by senior management at universities, low esteem of the indigenous PhD degree, little impact of PhD holders on the profession, and a lack of financial assistance. Yet, these qualified professionals were needed to fill senior positions, to advance the LIS profession and to promote a research culture in the country (Mahmood & Shafique, 2010).

2.4 The LIS PhD in the workplace

In North America, having a PhD enabled librarians to secure tenure as well as giving them status (Bechtel, 1985). This could lead to enhanced service provision, particularly in academic libraries, where librarians were seen as academic professionals. Not all, however, subscribed to this view. Ridley’s (2018) study of 13 academic librarians asked whether the PhD should be the new terminal degree. Participants (some held a doctorate, some did not) rejected the idea of it being a requirement.

Additionally, concerns have been raised about the potential replacement of academic librarians by PhD graduates from other disciplines. Herubel (2006) questioned whether these should be allowed to compete for professional posts without holding the required Master’s degree in LIS. In Canada, where academic librarians, who are ‘scholar-practitioners’, have gained faculty status in many academic libraries, the debate is now centring around the question whether or not the MLIS is adequate enough.
In the United Kingdom (UK), a small scale survey of library and archive staff working in research-related roles at the White Rose Universities of Leeds, Sheffield and York revealed that nine percent of employees, who only held LIS qualifications, felt fully equipped for their current role whereas the number of their colleagues with doctorates was 29% (admittedly coming from a small sample of seven PhD graduates) (Warren, 2018).

Schrader, Shiri and Williamson (2012) in a case study of academic librarians employed at the University of Saskatchewan report very high levels of scholarship, including doctoral study. Employees there had been actively encouraged to undertake research. But having a doctorate did not always translate into promotion to a higher rank as Sassen and Wahl (2014) found in their survey. Job performance and service were more important (cited by 97% of participating libraries) than research (85.1%), according to library deans and directors working in research libraries across the United States.

### 2.4.1 Research training of librarians

Studies that centred on the kind of research skills required by librarians emphasised ‘information literacy training’, which meant knowing how to educate library patrons in how to use library resources. This seemed to be the main focus of research training for librarians in all types of libraries.

Daland (2015) conducted two surveys which showed that a systemic programme for skills upgrading raised librarians’ confidence levels. She concluded that “a mapping of the library users’ needs will be a good basis for choosing where to focus when it comes to skills upgrading” (p. 14).
Brewerton (2012a) identified 32 skills and knowledge areas of interest to subject librarians in the UK, the vast majority of which were geared towards researcher support. ‘Deep understanding of discipline/subject’, on the other hand, was one that was deemed ‘unnecessary now or in the future’, which the author linked to a lack of ‘PhD librarians’ (p. 43). Nevertheless, in a separate study, some employers did emphasise the desire for a research degree in a relevant subject in their job specification for a subject librarian role (Brewerton, 2012b).

The vast majority of investigations still reported on a formulaic approach to improve librarians’ research skills resulting in providing assistance to academics and students. Some evidence, however, is now emerging that information professionals themselves needed to gain advanced degrees in order to become more embedded in the research cycle.

2.5 Service provision in libraries

There is growing body of literature on the type of services a library can and should provide to researchers and students working towards a higher degree. Unsurprisingly, most of these studies centre around academic and, to a lesser extent, special libraries (such as health libraries), but the role of public and school libraries is also gaining some traction. Indeed, libraries themselves have become research locations and partners in the research process – offering ethnographic spaces and gaining new comprehension into the usefulness of their services in supporting connected learning (e.g. in a study by Penuel, Chang-Order, & Michalchik, 2019). The impact of school libraries on learning outcomes has become the focus of more research, but as Mardis et al. (2019) have stated, causal effectiveness of school libraries programmes needs to be put on an evidence-based footing.
Research Libraries UK (RLUK) and the Research Information Network (RIN) commissioned a report into the value of libraries for research and researchers (Research Libraries UK and Research Information Network, 2011). One of the key findings was that connecting with researchers enhances the value of the library’s services. These ranged from picking up the next ‘big idea’ to displaying a researcher-focused support structure. So-called ‘embedded consultants’, subject librarians who have developed a deeper understanding of individual researchers’ needs and behaviours, provide better education and training, and therefore improve research practice. Olsen (2012) reported on one such case from Norway, where she became the ‘research group librarian’ in her university college, a fully participating member of a research team. The experiences of both librarian and researchers were very positive, with the former being called a ‘confidence builder’ by the team. The librarian developed a deeper understanding of the different parts of a research project and new ideas for library services. This need for librarians to comprehend the whole research process was confirmed by Wiklund’s and Voog’s (2013) research at Lund University Libraries. They also recommended tailoring the services to the research practices within different disciplines and liaising with other university units. Another initiative academic librarians could get involved in was the ‘interview-article’, which added comprehensive bibliographies to traditional interviews (Isaac-Menard, 2017).

In an earlier study by RIN, together with the Consortium of Research Libraries (CURL) (Research Information Network and Consortium of Research Libraries, 2007), librarians, library directors and researchers were asked about their views on the evolution of library roles. Interestingly, library managers believed that subject-based expertise and metadata would become more important in the future (both are clearly linked to research activities).
Librarians opted for teaching information literacy, and researchers still saw librarians primarily as custodians of archives and special collections. The study also revealed the ongoing problem of marketing of services, with many researchers not recognising that access to electronic content was provided by the library, a struggle well known to librarians in Ireland.

2.5.1 The perspective of library users

So how do researchers feel about the support they are getting from the library? Carroll (2011), writing from her experience as an early career researcher in the UK who found work in a library, recommended using ‘champions’ within the academic community to become ‘ambassadors’ for the services the library can provide. She felt that supervisors and peers, who actively promote the vast amount of support the library can offer, would be able to speak the same academic language as the PhD student. This presents a shift in attitude when compared to the old mantra: “you shouldn’t have to ask a librarian for help; if you can’t find it on your own, you’re no scholar”, as reported by Mann (2015, p. 241), himself a reference librarian with the Library of Congress. He advocated changing this to: “The more you learn, yourself, about library sources and retrieval systems, the better your research will be” (ibid, p. 241).

Gullbekk, Rullestad and Torras i Calvo (2013) ran focus groups with PhD students in their respective university libraries in Norway. They found that librarians should not presume that doctoral candidates had a ‘deficiency’ problem when it came to literature search skills, but rather link their training closer to the research questions and methods as well as to the tools available in a library. They also recommended enhanced marketing of library services, particularly in the compulsory parts of the PhD programme.
In Ireland, anecdotal evidence suggests that many librarians and their employers have an interest in advanced research degrees, often with a view to providing better library services, but to date no research has been published as to what happens on the ground.

**2.6 Summary of chapter**

This literature review presented relevant studies on the place of the PhD in LIS, both in academia and the workplace, including on current research training for librarians. Another part concentrated on how to improve service provision in research libraries and the experiences of patrons. None of the papers, however, investigated empirically what the perceptions of the role of the doctorate was in an Irish library setting. The next chapter will set the scene for the research design of the present study.
3. Research Framework and Data Collection

3.1. Overview of chapter

This chapter outlines the overall study design and theoretical framework of the thesis as well as its data collection methods. It starts off with an overview of the research approach, will then look at the data collection tools (semi-structured interviews and a focus group), justify the sampling decisions taken and describe the analysis tool 'Framework Analysis'. Some limitations will also be examined.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

3.2.1 Research Approach

The research questions were:

- What are the perceptions of librarians and employers of the value of having a doctorate?
- How does having a doctorate impact on library services?

These research questions influenced the choice of the overall theoretical framework. As this was an exploratory study, qualitative research was deemed to be appropriate. To compare some widely used approaches, the following table drawing on the works by Athens (2010), Lincoln (2007), Dahlberg (2006), Green (2005), Lester (1999) and Moustakas (1994) was created:
Table 3.1. Comparison of some research approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Approach</th>
<th>Phenomenography</th>
<th>Phenomenology</th>
<th>Naturalistic Inquiry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research object</strong></td>
<td>Human experience; relationship between participant and object</td>
<td>Human experience; reflecting on life worlds of participants</td>
<td>Human experience; social constructions of participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stance</strong></td>
<td>Interpretivist</td>
<td>Interpretivist</td>
<td>Constructivist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of study</strong></td>
<td>Empirical study</td>
<td>Theoretical thinking</td>
<td>Empirical study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aim</strong></td>
<td>Variations in experience</td>
<td>Theory of experience</td>
<td>Generate grounded theories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
<td>Collective meaning</td>
<td>Individual experience</td>
<td>Individuals’ viewpoints, behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of research site</strong></td>
<td>Not important in terms of analysis</td>
<td>Context of a particular situation important</td>
<td>Context of research site important for analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sampling</strong></td>
<td>Purposive sampling; maximum variation sampling</td>
<td>From single cases to purposive sampling</td>
<td>Usually purposive sampling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of the researcher</strong></td>
<td>Becomes primary data-gathering and analysis instrument</td>
<td>Words the experience</td>
<td>Becomes primary data-gathering instrument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data collection</strong></td>
<td>Usually interviews</td>
<td>Usually interviews, but also personal texts, participants observations, etc.</td>
<td>Case studies preferred; at least three collection methods (triangulation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data analysis</strong></td>
<td>Inductive process</td>
<td>Inductive process</td>
<td>Inductive process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Categories of description, outcome space</td>
<td>Essence of the experience</td>
<td>Based on grounded theory; open coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theory generation</strong></td>
<td>Post data collection</td>
<td>During and post data collection</td>
<td>Emerging from data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At its heart was an exploration of participants’ collective conceptions of a phenomenon with an emphasis on variation of experience. Therefore, Phenomenography was opted for: I had used it previously, felt confident that it would yield good results for the present research project and that the project could be done within the time scale.
Phenomenographic studies are on the increase in both LIS and Higher Education research, and they tend to use semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Yi and You (2015) carried out intensive interviews with both library users and librarians to gauge their perceptions of health information services. The analysis incorporated the use of the Critical Incident Technique. Evaluation of two educational programmes formed the base of Micari, Light, Calkins and Streitwieser’s (2007) study. They examined participants’ experiences of teaching and learning. Booth (1997) utilised Phenomenography in a study on undergraduates who were learning how to program. Cossham (2017) provided a summary of the advantages and disadvantages of this research approach: it helped understanding library services from a user’s perspective, but the investigator’s own understanding of a phenomenon could determine their labelling of categories – other researchers might not come up with the same descriptions. Tight (2016) even claimed that Phenomenography had been the only research design to have been developed within Higher Education research.

Phenomenography takes a relational (or non-dualist) qualitative, second order perspective, …aims to describe the key aspects of the variation of the experience of a phenomenon rather than the richness of individual experiences, and . . . yields a limited number of internally related, hierarchical categories of description of the variation (Trigwell, 2006, pp. 368–369).

### 3.2.2 Data collection tools

Following in the footsteps of other Phenomenographic studies, semi-structured interviews and a focus group were used. Each method of data collection, however, brings with it benefits and limitations.
Interviews are utilised for exploring issues in detail. They also help to understand complex processes, e.g. motivations, decisions, impacts (Lewis & McNaughton Nicolls, 2014). On the downside they take a lot of time to conduct and the transcribing process can be lengthy. Additionally, interviews can be intimidating for the interviewee. Issues can be sensitive, which requires thoughtfulness by the researcher (Seidman, 1998).

Focus groups, on the other hand, acknowledge that people’s opinions do not form in a vacuum and that listening to others helps shape your own understanding. They provide an additional source of data, which is the interaction between participants, and elicit a breadth of opinions if managed correctly. Focus groups work best for topics people could talk about in their everyday lives, and with those who have well-developed routines of talking to each other (Macnaghten & Myers, 2004). This tool presents high ‘face validity’: it is a method that is readily understood and the findings appear believable (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

The disadvantages include a danger of group dynamics taking over with the environment also having a big impact; less control of the process by the researcher; and less details than with interviews (some of the literature consulted were, among others, Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Finch, Lewis, & Turley, 2014).

3.2.3 Sampling decisions

Sampling decisions individual interviews

This project employed purpose sampling, a form of non-probability sampling, which means that “researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 103).
At the start, an invitation to participate was sent to all major LIS email lists run by the LAI. It explained the purpose of the study and invited suitable candidates to get in touch (see appendix A). This yielded an initial response of five librarians and one employer. I then engaged in snowballing by following up on recommendations by some of the respondents and other gatekeepers, such as colleagues who did not fit into either category but knew of people who did. As a result, another three participants signed up to be interviewed. One librarian approached me in person while I was on a site visit.

A decision was taken to interview ten librarians based in the Republic of Ireland who had completed a doctorate and were working (or had recently worked) in an information setting. In order to measure the views of employers, ten library managers were recruited, who were, except for one case, qualified librarians. Keith Trigwell, a well-established Phenomenographer, advised using between ten and 15 interviewees as a minimum (Trigwell, 2000). In order to reach the target numbers, a few participants were approached who were personally known through our work on LAI committees. Patton (2002) advocated looking actively for diverse characteristics in the sample, such as geographical variation, age, gender, stage in career, and picking participants who were as different as possible. The overall goal was to achieve maximum variation. Even though the initial efforts were more akin to convenience sampling, the final cohorts of both employers and librarians were quite diverse.

**Sampling decisions focus group**

The same conditions regarding the sampling frame applied to the focus group. Personal contacts allowed me to recruit members of the focus group. On 22nd March 2019, a ‘call for participation’ was sent via Doodle, an online meeting poll website.
Initially, nine librarians were invited. They were chosen because they shared the following characteristics relevant to this study:
- they currently worked or had worked with colleagues who held doctorates
- they were established in the library community and had professional experience (which means they could reflect on potential changes which happened within the profession over a period of time, especially in light of the economic recession)
- they were active in professional associations (so they would understand the importance of professional development, including advanced degrees)
- they worked in different library settings (e.g. academic or special libraries)

Four participants were available at a specific date and time. Krueger’s (1998) advice to first-timers was to keep it simple, to recruit four to five people and to limit the discussion to a few questions. As I was new to focus group interviewing, four librarians were deemed to be sufficient. Because the LIS profession in Ireland is quite small, the probability of people knowing each other was, predictably, high. In the end, the composition of the group ensured that rich data emerged.

3.2.4 Limitations

All data collection methods have their limitations, so credibility will be achieved through giving detailed accounts of the context of the study and of the methods of data collection. Piloting the interview schedules allowed me to reflect on many aspects of the study. Access to potential interviewees was restricted by the use of email lists run by the professional body.
Librarians whose LAI membership had lapsed or who had never signed up or who were part of the institutional membership scheme could have been potentially left out of the recruitment process.

As a result of being part of a small profession, all focus group participants knew each other beforehand. The literature was divided on whether this was desirable. Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2013) pointed out that building on pre-existing social networks could contribute to the success of focus groups as they provided safe spaces for interaction and self-disclosure. Marshall and Rossman (2006), on the other hand, emphasised that, traditionally, members of the group were unfamiliar with one another.

Due to time restrictions only one focus group was held. I obtained rich description, so felt that the voices of library colleagues had been heard. A follow-up study could incorporate more focus groups. Limited space in the dissertation dictated that some additional data will go unreported (e.g. contextual information about the visions managers had for their organisations). This will be explored further in subsequent publications. Also, since this was a small study employing a qualitative approach, the sample size was naturally limited. Nevertheless, the results of this study could make a contribution to the research on the role of advanced degrees in Irish libraries.
3.2.5 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was granted on 28th November 2018. All participants received information sheets prior to the interview (and focus group) outlining the project (see appendix B for an example) and affirming their rights under data protection legislation. It also emphasised their rights to withdraw their consent. Everyone signed a permission sheet (for an example see appendix C). I also stressed the fact that they could review their transcript if they wished.

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Pilot interview

The first step was a pilot interview with an academic working in LIS in order to test the questions and to gain some feedback from an experienced researcher. No changes needed to be made.

3.3.2 Interviews with librarians and employers

Once contact had been established, information sheets were sent out. Interviews took place between 6th December 2018 and 28th March 2019, with the majority conducted in Dublin, except for two in the wider Leinster region and one in Munster. Five interviewees in total were based outside Dublin. Participants could choose their preferred location. Some felt that for reasons of confidentiality they would rather not be talking in their offices or libraries. As a result, these meetings took place in other public spaces. Thanks to the highly sensitive recording device, an Olympus WS-311M Digital Voice recorder, noise pollution was not an issue when it came to transcription.
All ten librarians and ten library managers were interviewed on a one-to-one basis (interview schedules in appendices D and E). For personal reasons, an additional employer submitted written responses. These were incorporated into the overall data pool. Although the answers were much shorter and less precise, they were still deemed to be useful as the respondent had clearly taken time to reflect on each question. One manager had asked for a copy of the interview schedule beforehand. The interview questions derived from the literature review, e.g. the issue of employer support was identified in some studies. They were deliberately broad and open ended as to not lead interviewees. The rationale behind the type of questions asked was to draw out people’s experiences and opinions.

At the start of the interview some demographic questions were asked, the results of which are presented below in section 4.2 (see tables 4.1 and 4.2: demographic information about librarians and employers). The length of the interviews varied, ranging from 20 minutes to over one hour, with an average length of 33 mins 15 secs (average for employer interviews: 37 mins 10 secs; for librarian interviews: 29 mins 20 secs). Phenomenographic research encourages interviewees to elaborate on a point they wanted to make and to explore their thoughts. People also spoke at different speeds, so, naturally, there was variation in how many words were uttered within a certain timeframe. Interviewees offered a lot of examples when they highlighted a point they were making, which were helpful to me in terms of understanding their viewpoint and good for establishing a working relationship.

Interestingly, some interviewees, who initially were unsure if they had anything to say, spoke with great eloquence and at length about their experiences. Rapport had been established quickly, which could be attributed to the fact that interviewer and interviewee were members of the same professional community.
As a small token of gratitude, each interviewee was given a box of chocolates after the recording ended. At the end of each interview, reflective notes about the interviewing process were written.

### 3.3.3 Focus group with library colleagues

The focus group met on the evening of 12th April 2019. A librarian provided a neutral office space, which was located in Dublin city centre, thus convenient for all participants.

At the beginning of the session, librarians completed a personal data form (see appendix F). Refreshments were provided and participants were given time to eat and settle before the discussion commenced. The recording started with a reassurance to all members of their rights to withdraw and confidentiality, an explanation of data protection measures and an introduction of all participants (which was helpful for the recording). We opened with a hypothetical scenario to invite participants to engage in some blue sky thinking (see appendix G). The session was digitally audio recorded and lasted 1 h 17 mins 15 secs. Voices were distinct and clear, and the transcript showed that there was no domination of any one participant, but an equal share of speaking time.

After the debriefing, as a thank you for their involvement, participants were given a box of chocolates.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The outcome of a Phenomengraphic study is to understand the qualitatively different ways in which participants experienced a particular phenomenon, distilled into *categories of description*. 

28
Themes that are common to all categories but are experienced in a diverging manner are ‘dimensions of variation’.

The final so-called ‘outcome space’ consists of a description of the relations that categories have which each other and also to the dimensions of variations within each category.

As the questions asked varied slightly for each interview guide, two different outcome spaces will be formed. They will be compared with each other to tease out similarities and differences. The conceptions emerging from the focus group participants will constitute supplementary data by comparing and contrasting with the findings of the first two groups.

### 3.4.1 Initial considerations

When it comes to data analysis, Phenomenography usually takes into account the full transcripts of interviews and can go through lengthy circles of sorting of data. As the present study had to be conducted within a limited space of time, Framework Analysis (FA) was adopted, a method developed by Jane Ritchie and Liz Spencer in the 1980s in order to study applied qualitative research questions within a limited time frame (Pope, Ziebland, & Mays, 2000).

FA has been utilised in many research projects since, e.g. by Ingham, Fry, O’Meara and Tourle (2015) who looked at general practitioners’ motivations for and practices of teaching. Share, Williams and Kerrins (2018) investigated Polish migrant parents’ use of Skype. Interviews are not the only source of data that can be analysed using FA: Olson, Reiland, Davies and Reitmaier Koehler (2018) used reflective journal entries, and van Lith and Spooner (2018) online surveys.
FA provides a matrix for data input early on in the transcription process, and it is acceptable to create initial headings even before all interviews have been conducted. Initial concerns about this aspect not being compatible with Phenomenography, where categories only emerge after many iterative cycles of analysis using all final transcripts, were dispelled, however.

A further literature review revealed a number of studies which had combined a Phenomenographic approach with Framework Analysis: Visram, Goodall and Steven (2014) investigated conceptions of knowledge translation of public health workers employing focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Venkatasalu, Kelleher and Shao (2015) examined perceived clinical outcomes of teaching methods. Their participants received classroom- and simulation-based teaching and were subsequently interviewed in-depth about their experiences. In the field of LIS, Rajapakse and Kiran (2017) explored succession planning in academic libraries through interviews and document analysis.

The other advantage was that FA did not favour any theoretical, epistemological or philosophical approach (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, & Redwood, 2013). The present study therefore treats Phenomenography as its theoretical framework and FA as its method of analysis.

3.4.2 Transcription processes

I started by transcribing two interviews in full and verbatim. Two interviewees had requested their transcript, but one experienced this in a negative way feeling coming across as ineloquent. Forbat and Henderson (2005) warned that although the sharing of transcripts might occur in a spirit of empowering participants, it could be experienced as threatening and confrontational. Interviewees were reassured that their interview excerpts would be handled across the sample.
Forbat and Henderson (2005) recommended offering copies of academic articles resulting from the research to the participants as good practice. Two papers are scheduled to be written later this year on the findings of this thesis and will be forwarded to all interested parties.

In the end no requests for any changes were made and both participants allowed their interview to be added to the pool of transcripts. The transcription continued with eight more randomly selected recordings resulting in full transcripts of five interviews each for the librarian and the employer cohorts respectively.

Reflecting on the amount of time needed, however, I realised that I would need professional help transcribing the remaining ten interviews. Further discussion with my supervisor led to enlisting the services of a professional transcriber. The Chair of the Research Ethics Committee (personal communication, July, 2, 2019) had advised to remove any part of the recording which could identify the participants. The focus group recording, on the other hand, was transcribed verbatim and in full by me. When it came to the analysis a whole group analysis approach was opted for, which treats the data produced by the group as a whole without delineating individual contributions. The group therefore becomes the unit of analysis and will be treated in the same way as a unit of individual data. If data are being summarised as well as indexed at the data-management stage, there will be one row in the ‘matrix’ for each group. (Spencer, Ritchie, O’Connor, Morrell, & Ormston, 2014, p. 340).
3.4.3 Framework Analysis (FA) in practice

As I was not familiar with FA, I followed the guidelines set out by other authors, in particular by Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicolls and Ormston (2014), who devoted two chapters to data analysis and provided a step-by-step account of FA. More advice on FA was given by Furber (2010); Smith and Firth (2011); Iliffe et al. (2015); Keirnan and Hill (2018); Parkinson, Eatough, Holmes, Stapley and Midgley (2016); and Sristava and Thomson (2009). All of these studies gave examples of how they had adopted FA. The first ten interviews formed the basis of the framework and the remaining ten were analysed applying said structure. Most of the tasks outlined below corresponded with steps usually undertaken in a Phenomenographic study – the exception being the development of a matrix framework early on.

Step 1: Familiarisation

This step involved listening to all recordings again. As I had conducted the interviews myself, had transcribed half of them verbatim and had recorded additional information in the field notes, I was already very familiar with the data. Re-reading all transcripts, I wrote another set of extended memos (five to ten pages for each interview) summarising what had been said, reflecting on ideas and jotting down recurrent themes. At this stage a set of basic codes was established.
Some of the statements highlighted a specific way of understanding, and these quotes were captured in a separate document.
Step 2: Identification of thematic framework

The initial framework was then created in Excel based on preliminary codes. It involved grouping and regrouping of these units together into similar themes. Some of the interview research questions (see appendices D and E) also provided initial headings for the columns. Each interviewee was allocated one or more rows in an active sheet.

Image 3.3. Excerpt of initial framework

![Image of Excel sheet with interviewee data]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 1</td>
<td>Specific role in current job because of collections (language skills)</td>
<td>Motivation (3C): Because you have a PhD it means you're somehow valuable in a field where it has no direct relevance; people can get disappointed and disillusioned (outside particular interest) has not much relevance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>People do it be seen differently by themselves and by other people (09:05): “This is the way for me to be!”, very</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>When you are teaching (and have a PhD) it's comforting, it's satisfying that when you are at</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of Doctorate</th>
<th>Relationship employer</th>
<th>Getting a job</th>
<th>Getting promotion</th>
<th>Skills used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 3: Indexing

Hand in hand with this part of the analysis process went the indexing work. Going back to the ‘raw data’ of the transcripts, the margins of the printouts were annotated by applying codes line by line. As a result, the draft framework underwent a number of revisions.

Image 3.4. Indexing the manuscripts

Step 4: Charting

This involved summarising the data into more manageable chunks of text. At this stage connections were made between different sheets of the spreadsheet. Cross-referencing occurred within a case (i.e. interviewee), but also across themes.
To aid with charting, a code of explanatory special characters was devised:

*Figure 3.1. Key to special characters used*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(mins:secs)</th>
<th>Time stamp on transcript</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[information in brackets]</td>
<td>added information, which had been added out of transcript (could identify speaker, only used to explain context, not used in quotes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Underscored text</strong></td>
<td>'Meta data’ – explanation and interpretation by researcher, something that stands out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Italic</em></td>
<td>Reference to data in other sheet, theme and cell information in brackets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ ←</td>
<td>Reference to next cell in the same row</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>means ‘leading to’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Printing the whole file onto A3 paper allowed for a better overview. This stage of data analysis was quite comprehensive, and many cycles of revision.

*Image 3.5. Print out of framework*
Step 5: Mapping and interpretation

The final stage meant synthesising data. Colour codes were applied to highlight similarities across the whole spreadsheet, using both the print outs and the electronic version.

Image 3.6. Screenshot of the colour-coded framework

These statements were then grouped into initial ‘categories of descriptions’. Themes that had started emerging during the indexing process became ‘dimensions of variation’ (see subsection 3.4 above for detailed explanations of these terms).

As with all qualitative analysis, there were some false starts and a lot of regrouping of data. The final categories and dimensions, however, became quite succinct with clear delimitations.
3.5 Summary of chapter

Chapter 3 outlined the design of the study. Phenomenography was chosen as its research approach. Details of the semi-structured interviews conducted with PhD holders and library managers as well as the focus group with library colleagues were then sketched out. This was followed by an introduction to Framework Analysis, the data analysis tool, and how it was applied in this study. The next chapter will examine the findings.
4. Findings

4.1. Overview of chapter

This chapter reports on the findings. Data collected from all three cohorts was analysed: the perceptions of librarians and employers were formed into two separate Phenomenographic outcome spaces; the conceptions of the focus group were interwoven, complementing and juxtaposing them.

Some demographic information about all the participants will be displayed first. The results will then be presented in three parts in order to answer the research questions: the first section will define the categories of descriptions and the related dimensions of variation. Both together constitute the perceptions of the value and role of the doctorate (thus answering research question one). These different ways of experiencing will be further investigated in section two to reveal how they impact on library services (research question two). Additional observations will form the third part. The chapter will conclude with a short summary.
4.2 Demographic information

4.2.1 The librarians

The table displayed below summarises demographic information about the librarians.

Table 4.1. Demographic information librarians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Bracket</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-40 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50 years</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60 years</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other EU</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual citizenship (Irish/other EU)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Doctorate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD/DPhil in a History-related subject</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD in Computer-related subject</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD in a Literature subject</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD in a Science subject</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a further breakdown could identify individuals)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience as Librarian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 years</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 14 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 – 8 years</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years and less</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Library</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special/research**</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic (University)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic (Institute of Technology)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public library*</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(*one librarian worked in two different libraries;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#no further breakdown as this could identify librarians)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional post-graduate degrees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master in Library and Information Studies</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Diploma in LIS</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master in Information (and Library) Management</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Master degree</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Diploma degree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(some held more than one additional degree)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Their level of self-reported experiences as researchers varied substantially ranging from 5 years to 20 years. Some counted only their PhD work, while others reported additional research activities.

Intriguingly, none of the librarians held a doctorate in LIS, but mainly in other Social Science, Art and Humanities fields. Only two PhDs were in Science subjects. I did expect to have some LIS doctorate holders to become involved in this study. The census (see introduction chapter) did not elude to the subject area of the PhD holders who currently work in libraries (and the wider GLAM sector). This made me wonder if none of the LIS PhD graduates worked in the field, but exclusively in academia? The absence of LIS PhDs will be discussed further in sub chapters 5.4 and 6.2.

4.2.2 The employers

The managers also showed substantial variation in their demographic makeup. They had experience of advanced research: two held PhDs (one in a field of Science and one in a Literature-related subject); one was doing a subject based one; three had thought about it in the past; and one had started a PhD in LIS, but did not finish it.
### Table 4.2. Demographic information employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Includes 11(^{th}) employer, who had submitted short written answers</th>
<th>How many employers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dual citizenship (Irish/other EU)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience as a Librarian</td>
<td>40 years</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30-39 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20-29 years</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10-19 years</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 10 years</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience as an Employer</td>
<td>Over 30 years</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20-29 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10-19 years</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 10 years</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Library</td>
<td>Special/research*</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic (University)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic (Institute of Technology)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic (other)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public library</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(*no further breakdown)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of employees in library</td>
<td>Over 100 employees</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51 – 100 employees</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30 – 50 employees</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 30 employees</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many with PhD in the library?</td>
<td>1 librarian*</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 librarians</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4-6 librarians</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(*one employer currently enrolled)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.2.3 The focus group

Three of the participants were female, one male. Their experiences as librarians ranged from seven to 28 years and their ages from the 40s to mid-50s. All worked in academic libraries, albeit with different foci – one at a university (offering up to level ten qualifications), one in an institute of technology (up to level ten), one in a private academic institution (up to level nine), and one in a membership organisation (up to level nine). Two of the four librarians had previous experience of undertaking a doctorate, but neither had finished it. All four held a Master’s degree in LIS and had additional degrees.
4.3 The role of the doctorate

So how was the role of the doctorate perceived by participants in this study? The analysis of the answers given by the librarians was grouped as explained in the last chapter. After many iterative cycles, the researcher established three distinct ways of understanding the role of the doctorate in this cohort of participants. These categories of descriptions, ‘providing better service’, ‘being an expert’ and ‘developing as a person’, were quite distinct from each other and will be described below. It is worth reiterating that each librarian could hold one or more of these perceptions depending on what was the centre of their attention while they spoke. The colours reflect the ones used during analysis (see subsection 3.4.3 above).

Four succinct dimensions of variation were observed: ‘motivation’ (to do the PhD), ‘skills’ (developed through the PhD and applied in the workplace), ‘benefit’ (who benefits from the PhD?) and ‘personal attributes’ (personality and behavioural aspects). Each one is more to the forefront in some categories than in others.

Each category and dimension of variation will now be depicted in more detail. Quotes from the participants will bring key aspects to life. They were selected because they represented a ‘typical’ answer for this category. The time stamp of the interview, interviewee number and type of library are added. Words in italic denote emphasis in speech; bold text highlights the dimension.
4.3.1 Three different conceptions (librarians)

Category 1: Providing a better service

In the first category, librarians’ felt that the PhD had a strong role in providing a better service in the library they worked in. Skills gained through the doctorate played an important role.

Table 4.3. Librarians’ category 1 (Service)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Service improvement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD helps me to provide a better service. Skills learned through the research can be applied across the organisation and beyond, which makes me a better librarian. There is also a career aspect to it as it allows me to move into specific roles within the library.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Skills’ and ‘Benefit’ were somewhat intertwined in this category. The competencies developed through the doctoral degree directly impacted on the library service more generally:

I don’t have to learn, but I already know. Whereas if I haven’t had the PhD and the access over the years to various documents and certain repositories, I wouldn’t know that. I’d say yes, I do actually use **some of the skills I've learned through and across the PhD for the workplace.** (08:55) Int. 18, public

No equivocation, there absolutely is a role. On a good day, you’d like to think a PhD is a certain style of achievement and excellence. That can only be a **good thing in a professional context.** (29:37) Int. 9, special/research

In particular what I've seen, [*the role of the PhD in libraries*] seems to gravitate towards research. *Promoting research of the library, of the community, of the institute,* in that sense. So that would be research as a key component. Also, to aid people in their research, to provide a support network. I suppose I like the idea of community practicing research in groups, to feed idea and build knowledge together. (18:49) Int. 5, academic (IT)
They also saw it as a way of future proofing the profession:

I can see one job that could be... the more **technical jobs like research data management, as it becomes more and part in the future years, and maybe having a PhD in that area will be important.** (27:05) Int. 14, academic (IT)

There were, however, dissenting voices:

In other words, you **know the skills and the techniques of working in the library. Having a PhD has nothing to do with it.** (13:00) Int. 4, public

This will be explored further in section 5.3 below (librarians’ skills versus PhD skills).

**Category 2 – Becoming/Being an expert**

Here, the emphasis was more on how the PhD had impacted on their relationship with library patrons and other stakeholders.

**Table 4.4. Librarians’ category 2 (Expert)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 2</th>
<th>Being/becoming an expert</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am an expert. The PhD adds gravitas, and I am being taken seriously and not talked down by stakeholders. I can relate to PhD students and academics alike and can help individual people with their requests. The PhD has provided me with a depth of knowledge and clarity of thought.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘Personal attributes’, such as behaviour or attitude of the PhD holder, were strong here:

I just used my personality and my skills to overcome [negative comments from colleagues] because that’s part of being a doctoral student is attending conferences, it’s meeting people regularly and you have to have good communication skills. In a way, it helped. (14:45), Int. 5, academic (IT)

This could also help in situations where others displayed patronising behaviour:

… having the PhD, having the letters after your name, or the letters before your name, sometimes will make a difference between being totally patronised, and actually being taken seriously. (12:38) Int. 12, academic (university)

The benefits of having done the PhD also changed the librarian’s outlook:

The big thing that jumps out to me when I think of people with a PhD or going through the process of a PhD is that sense of rigour and understanding what depth of knowledge looks like, that is unbelievably powerful, because I feel that once you have a depth of knowledge in one area, an enormous depth of knowledge, even it’s one tiny little area, it lets you know what depth of knowledge looks like. (05:15) Int. 7, special/research

You don’t have to argue your corner, you’re an expert, you just walk in and you are an expert. (18:05) Int. 6, academic (university)

The skills picked up during the PhD process are used to helping specific cohorts of patrons, who were then the beneficiaries of these advanced research skills:

It means that when people coming into you who are doing third-level research you know what they need and you know how to advise them. (12:30) Int. 1, special/research
So I think it’s, I think **PhDs are useful in terms of supporting students’ research or patrons coming in, if they have research queries, I think having a PhD is really essential there.** (15:05) Int.18, public

The partnership with patrons, especially with academics, benefits also:

You see again, working in a university, **if a librarian has a Ph.D. and then does a piece of research [...]**, then I think it will carry **more clout**, it might be easier to pass through things, through ethics committees [...] I think increasingly, **we are trying to create joint projects with librarians and with academic researchers.** (35:20) Int. 3, academic (university)

**Category 3: Developing as a person**

This category talks about the personal impact of a doctorate. The decisions behind embarking on a PhD were prominent here.

*Table 4.5. Librarians’ category 3 (Personal Development)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing as a person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I fell into the PhD, thought it would be a good idea. It demonstrates my commitment to education, research and lifelong learning. It was not a career move; I did it purely out of interest and personal fulfilment. I loved the topic or had an interest in subject area. There is also a strong sense of moral responsibility.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'Motivation’ was the strongest dimension here:

I suppose it has a responsibility, it depends on the discipline but **responsibility to stick to the facts** and **make sure that you bring through the truth of the research, as much as possible.** (05:30) Int. 18, public
I do think that, just for me, **personally, I just love studying and reading and writing about it**, you know. (19:07) Int. 1, special/research

I like to think that librarians are an eclectic bunch. Often what we have in common most, is that we all are, in one way or another, **lifelong learners. Ph.D. is one symptom of that**, but it doesn't have to be that. (38:50) Int. 3, academic (university)

The skills developed through the doctorate, incidentally, improve their work as librarians:

…even the **skills of finding information for your own research has helped and helped me in how I approach librarianship. The idea of analyzing how to write is very important**…. (17:55) Int. 14, academic (IT)

As well as doing the PhD, I used to teach, which at the that time was **research teaching**, and **there's a lot of my past experience I can use.** In a way, it was quite easy to start teaching here because I had quite a lot of experience. (12:00) Int. 5, academic (IT)

Even though the PhD was not intended as a career move, it helped some librarians moving into the library world:

I definitely, like I said, **coming in with literally no library experience, uhm, and I've just a totally different sense of things and a very strong sense of my own, what I wanted to contribute as me, as a whole picture, which isn't something you could pigeonhole because I have such diverse experiences.** (24:56) Int. 7, special/research

The doctorate could also become an unexpected asset:

**It can still pay off completely unexpectedly way down the line.** (29:03) Int. 9, special/research
It might be more beneficial in an academic library than a public library, because I suppose there's more outlet to use it, and there's always more events or conferences available, if you're working in an academic library than a public library because the nature of the library is so different. However, that's not to say that's not useful in a public library because you can still use it in a research way, you can still use the skills that you have acquired, and you can help members of the public or students, or you can, even in an administrative way, just organisational kind which you have to have for the PhD anyway. (15:30) Int. 18, public

But the benefits of having a PhD could also be outweighed by negative aspects:

I think sometimes people with PhDs can get disappointed and disillusioned when they realise that what they have done, outside their particular interest in it, doesn't have much relevance. (5:30) Int. 4, public

Only two interviewees specifically mentioned doing the PhD as a way into academia:

It was combination, I suppose, of interest and the fact that there wasn't much there and the fact that at that particular point in time, I wanted to go into academia, so I wanted at some point maybe pursue that. (5:00) Int. 18, public

[The PhD] a requirement for certain [academic] career paths in [mentions other country]. So, that was my motivation. (16:34) Int. 3, academic (university)

This was a very interesting discovery, which will be explored in the discussion chapter below.
4.3.2 Synthesis of results for librarians

Bringing all of the findings above together, the synthesis of results for the librarians, incorporating the categories and the dimensions, is shown in table 4.6.

Table 4.6. Outcome space librarians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category→ Dimension</th>
<th>Category 1 (Service improvement)</th>
<th>Category 2 (Expert)</th>
<th>Category 3 (Personal development)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>PhD skills can be employed to deliver different/new services</td>
<td>PhD skills are used specifically to help patrons</td>
<td>Confident in using skills; have helped in day job as librarian, but more incidental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal attributes</td>
<td>Independent scholar and safe pair of hands</td>
<td>Gravitas</td>
<td>Pride in achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Career opportunities; jobs within the library</td>
<td>Equal status of librarian and patron (academic)</td>
<td>Love of learning, do it for yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficiary</td>
<td>Library services in general; perception of library</td>
<td>Library patrons/other stakeholders</td>
<td>Personal fulfilment; will not necessarily lead to an academic career</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In each category, some dimensions are stronger than others. To emphasise this, text is underlined.

The next section will look at the employers’ perceptions.
4.3.3 Three different conceptions (employers)

The employers’ answers underwent the same analysis procedures as the ones of the librarians. The dimensions were somewhat identical to those of the librarians: ‘changing perceptions of the library’ (leading to better services), ‘being an expert’, and ‘growing as a person’. They were understood, however, in the context of looking at the phenomenon from the participants’ position, i.e. ‘Motivation’ (to employ an employee with a PhD or support them doing one), ‘Benefit’ (who benefits from employing a PhD holder?), ‘Skills’ (the skills the employee has gained/brings to the workplace) and ‘Personal attributes’ (of the employee). The following sub section explores all categories and dimensions in greater detail.

Category 1: Changing perceptions

Having staff with a doctorate opened up new dimensions for the library, both in terms of current services and future-proofing its existence.

Table 4.7. Employers’ category 1 (Changing stereotypes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changing stereotypes/perceptions of librarians and libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The PhD constitutes a sea change, a game changer. The fact that librarians do doctorates helps with the standing of the profession and enhances its reputation. Having employees with PhDs raises the profile of the library. They add value to the library and its services, sometimes opening up new roles and bringing in additional business.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ‘benefit’ dimension comes to the forefront in this category. The library, the wider institution and the LIS profession profited from the fact that librarians had PhDs:
The whole nature of [the project] changed completely and the outputs changed, the quality increased enormously. That was a huge benefit there. On a more general point, I think having PhDs, having doctors-- Having people with doctorates on the library staff raised the profile of library staff as well. (13:45) Int. 8, academic (IT)

The advantages are just so numerous, I just think in terms of our confidence, reducing librarian stereotypes, reducing academic silos, it fits really well into developments, the greater emphasis on, imperatives on academic institutions for research output and high quality research output, it just matches perfectly with all of that. (12:50) Int. 2, academic (other)

We're benefiting from [their] hard work. In that regard, it is rubbing off on us. (23:00) Int. 15, special/research

Colleagues with doctorates have made great contributions in leading reflections on librarians’ professional identity, using their own research to inspire and encourage colleagues to reflect on their own professional identity and to develop a personal teaching philosophy. Written statement, Int. 21, academic (IT)

Several employers pointed to the supposed power of the PhD in changing stereotypes:

One of the things that it does give you credibility, because, unfortunately, even though we’re in 2019, there are a lot of people, including academics, who assume that the role of the librarian is to stamp books. (20:23) Int. 20, academic (IT)

...there's a generational effect that little by little we are seeing PhD somewhere on the website, or the [mentions role] role, subliminally sends a message to this young generation coming up, that, you know, librarians don’t just stamp books anymore, and we are academic. (22:30) Int. 2, academic (other)

I think it is a sea change because I think there's now a much better recognition certainly among senior managers in higher education that they recognize that library staff do do more than stamp books and shelve them. I think the PhD plays a big part in that. (30:24) Int. 8, academic (IT)
Some managers even saw the next step in the evolution of the profession:

[The PhD] is the source, you see, it's the academic equivalent of professionalisation, where we... [R: Don't know, academicisation?] Exactly, we make up a word, an academicisation, exactly! Int. 2, academic (other)

There were some doubts, however, whether the doctorate had any bearings on library services:

I mean for the profession as a whole, I suppose it is helpful to have people in the profession who are experts or have academic, uhm, expertise, an excellent academic achievement. Whether there's a direct link between that and the delivery of [library] services is another issue, but from the point of view of the profession I think it's possibly a good thing. (08:00) Int. 13, public

Category 2: Being an expert

Here, the PhD’s role in becoming an expert was prominent. The librarian with a doctorate linked in with academics and other stakeholders.

Table 4.8. Employers’ category 2 (Expert)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Becoming/Being an expert</td>
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<tr>
<td>Having a PhD means that the holder has become an expert in their field and has experience of the research process. It is a recognition that librarians and the library are partners in the educational process and colleagues of academics. Employees with PhDs are not afraid of talking to people, who are listening to them as they share their experience and expertise. A PhD equips them with transferable skills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘Personal attributes’ combined with ‘skills’ were the strong dimensions here:

I think having a PhD just gives you an insight into research. (18:10) Int. 2, academic (other)

There is a recognition that the library staff are colleagues in the academic process. (29:56) Int. 8, academic (IT)

But certainly for a PhD, for me it means, you know, you're highly intelligent, highly engaged and have focused on a particular area and researched it in depth, original, completely original research. (05:10) Int. 10, special/research

So what it does is it levels the playing field, and it says to people, ‘I understand what you're talking about, don't talk down to me.’ I mean you can have a conversation on the wavelength that they also understand you speak the same language. (20:40) Int. 20, academic (IT)

Managers felt these librarians were sharing the expertise gained from their PhDs, such as data analysis:

By having someone like [person] who has that skill set, it motivates our management team, as in library management. Gives us a bit more confidence going into a higher up again level of senior management to say, ‘we need to look at all aspects’. We'd always be looking at the holistic approach. Libraries do look at the holistic approach, but by having someone like [person] or a PhD student that is able to break down the data for us, it gives us more, you may think of a better word, more ammunition, when you're going in to see your senior management and you're making a case for libraries. (16:30) Int. 19, public
Having doctors among their staff also sometimes had a knock-on effect for the rest:

I think the fact that we have library staff with doctorates was a precursor of [renaming grades]. I think people's perceptions of library staff changed where they could see-- The academics could see that these were their academic equals, and then they started looking into the qualifications of all the library staff as well. They suddenly realised that they're highly qualified. (14:55) Int. 8, academic (IT)

Category 3: Growing as a person

Finally, category 3 related to the PhD as an accidental qualification, which people pursued for their own personal development. It nonetheless has benefits for the library, such as having staff who are more confident.

Table 4.9. Employers’ category 3 (Personal growth)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A doctorate is a personal thing. People do it because they love research. Their sense of self has changed, they have grown and are more confident. PhD is for personal development and fulfilment. They might end up working in an environment where other people have PhDs, but that would not be their priority. The value to the workplace can be incidental.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Personal attributes’ are paramount in this category. Employers noticed a positive attitude and self-confidence.

[Person] has a confidence, it's kind of hard to put your finger on it, but there is a confidence there. No query sort of fazes [them]. And I think it's just because you've been down that road. (22:35) Int. 2, academic (other)

We're incredibly lucky in that the person that happens to be doing this is hugely committed to libraries, and sees the big picture as well that, we actually be chipping in. (23:10) Int. 19, public
This, however, occasionally backfired with tension arising between PhD holders and their colleagues:

If you ask my opinion, I think they’d like to think most of the time [having a PhD is not a problem] until they were challenged about it, until maybe somebody raises an alternative suggestion. If that person isn't at the same perceived level within the organisation, **they might try to pull rank.** (27:20) Int. 16, special/research

Nevertheless, studying for a PhD can bring unexpected benefits in the workplace. Current PhD students among the library staff provide an additional service to the library, academics and fellow students:

I think any study like that **increases the abilities of individual staff** which can-- Even if the subject has got no relation at all to library studies, it gives those staff **greater skills which they can apply to the day job in unexpected ways.** (38:45) Int. 8, academic (IT)

This is what I was saying earlier about the, not undercover, but they're out in the market that we tend to find hard to reach. They're listening to the issues that are coming up, the graduate student experience, and building up their own network of contacts. Then they're also displaying their ability to the graduate students and their supervisors in areas that we know we're good at but it's hard to get to the matter. Simple things like referencing, literature searches. ‘How would you know all this?’ ‘I know it all because I'm a librarian'. (21:03) Int. 17, academic (university)

Mirroring a similar statement in the librarians' group, the question of quality of skills versus personal attributes also came up with the employers:

…the question I always ask, and this is not, by no means to diminish anybody’s PhD or the fact they’d gone through that rigorous programme and everything, is **how much of it is them and how much of it is the PhD,** do you know? Because people who are really, who, **who're really bright and focussed and curious are kind of going to be that, PhD or no PhD,** do you know what I mean? (17:00) Int. 11, special/research
This will be picked up again in section 5.3 PhD skills versus librarian skills).

### 4.3.4 Synthesis of results for employers

The full outcome space for employers, an aggregation of findings, is exhibited in table 4.10.

Again, in each category, some dimensions are stronger than others:

**Table 4.10. Outcome space employers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category → Dimension</th>
<th>Category 1 (Changing perceptions)</th>
<th>Category 2 (Expert)</th>
<th>Category 3 (Personal growth)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills</strong></td>
<td>Skills open up new roles for librarians/services (incl. pedagogy)</td>
<td>Academic rigor; discipline knowledge; transferable skills</td>
<td>Person has resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal attributes</strong></td>
<td>Reflecting on role and services</td>
<td>Can talk and share expertise</td>
<td>Staff are more confident and positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation</strong></td>
<td>Leadership qualities</td>
<td>Valid partners to academics/stakeholders</td>
<td>Consolidates learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benefit</strong></td>
<td>Library/Profession: Challenging stereotypes; professional identity</td>
<td>New services</td>
<td>Personal development; enjoyment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary, this section showed that the role of the PhD was experienced in distinct ways. Unexpectedly, both sets of categories were quite similar. The cohorts were asked slightly different questions, and the analysis was conducted separately.
One explanation could be that the focus of attention for participants in both groups had been, obviously, on the same phenomenon. This does not mean that these categories are the only ways in which people could possibly understand it, but that there is a somewhat common and widespread understanding within the profession.

The dimensions of variations also showed an overlap, albeit with distinctive emphases in each category. The full outcome spaces displayed above show how these categories and dimensions are related to each other in more detail. For reasons of readability, the next section will focus on what this means in terms of implications for the library service.

4.4 The impact on library services

How did the participants perceive the impact of the doctorate on library services? In order to answer this question, the focal point of each category will be examined.

The categories had different foci and this became evident in both sets: personal reasons were at the forefront in categories 2 (being an expert) and 3 (developing as a person) and organisational reasons in categories 1 (providing a better service) and 2 (being an expert). Additionally, category 2 (being an expert) formed the most inclusive of categories.
This hierarchy had implications for the role of the PhD in providing library services: category 1 related the doctorate to organisational services and the development of the profession (here combined under the label ‘providing a better service’). Category 3 saw the PhD as a set of personal skills with the impact to library services happening accidentally. Category 2 displayed the most holistic view: skills and knowledge learned through the doctorate had manifold effects on library services. The following vignettes attempt to demonstrate how participants perceived of the impact of the PhD on library services by creating hypothetical libraries and librarians. The viewpoints of the focus group will also be added here.
Vignette 1: The PhD as a means of transformation: growing future library services by elevating librarians and the LIS profession

In this library, the manager is very appreciative of having a librarian with a PhD. They may have actively recruited them and are interested in more staff enrolling in doctorates. They themselves are inspired to study again and comment on how much they have learned already. Often, they ask the PhD holder to do extra work at management level, including help setting policies or presenting data at an institutional level.

There is a fear that other employees could see the PhD holder as the ‘go to person’ for the manager and that they could receive favours in return.

For these employers, the doctorate helps combat stereotypes of libraries and librarians, which is reaching far beyond the organisation. The manager can see how PhDs can transform the profession. New avenues open up for LIS, which will result in additional information services yet to be invented.

Encouraging students and practitioners to pursue doctorates will help LIS strengthen its place among other academic subjects.
Within the library, the person with the doctorate adds value to existing services. Their pedagogical knowledge allows them to evaluate the contribution of the library to academic processes and to suggest changes. The librarian has been involved in a wide range of library services: they offer outreach events on a grand scale, or they had been consulted on the new library building or cultural centre. Additionally, they have built partnerships with outside institutions. They have given presentations, published books and helped organise conferences. The librarian see themselves as one of the gang and they usually don't mention their qualification.

The colleagues appreciate having a librarian with a PhD in their midst as they are generous with the knowledge they gained through their studies.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vignette 2: The PhD as an anchor: academic skills of the individual feed into the educational process</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In this scenario, the employer strongly acknowledges the skill set gained from a PhD. They might have hired holders specifically for a role. The library has a place within the educational activities of the parent organisation, and the doctorate emphasises and enhances that role.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From an organisational point of view, the librarians are called upon to represent the library in academic council or in meetings, because they speak the same language as other researchers and can present facts. The PhD carries more clout. Often, they are asked to write reports or bibliography because they have those scholarly skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On a personal level the skills learned allow the PhD holder to relate to their patrons. They are confident in giving advice about research design and process, publication and dissemination; conduct teaching sessions with students (librarians as educators); co-author papers or support services that require academic context and analytical skills (such as making special collections more accessible, or genealogy in public libraries). The relationship with students and academics is very strong in this library.</td>
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</table>
There can be conflict with colleagues when challenged on decisions made, although the PhD holder usually does not pull ranks.

Vignette 3: The PhD as an ornament: a testament to personal achievement

In this library, the manager happens to have an employee with a doctorate. Their qualification was not a key desirable during the recruitment process, but rather an additional qualification, a nice-to-have. Above all, it shows a commitment to lifelong learning. There will be no financial or promotional reward for it. The manager notices how the employee has a positive attitude and an aura of confidence around them. This can lead to new services for the library, e.g. having published parts of their dissertation or authored a book, the PhD holder is now interested in advising others and co-authoring papers with them.

The librarian embarked on a doctorate mainly for personal development, for personal fulfilment. It often happened by
accident: they had a general interest in a topic, had wanted a challenge, had no other plans and were given the opportunity. In most cases they had already worked in the library. In some cases, the PhD made them move into the library world: during their research they were impressed by the skills displayed by librarians they encountered.

The doctorate also helps them with their day job: skills developed, or knowledge gained during the PhD can become incidental aids in developing and improving services for the library, especially when answering research-related questions at the reference desk. To their surprise, their research has wider implications outside the library, e.g. could inform government policy.

Colleagues have seen the librarian doing a PhD, but judged them by their skills as information professionals. If they come into the library after graduation, the PhD will be one qualification of many. Other employees might hold a second Master's degree.

In summary, these were three depictions of how the PhD impacted on libraries and their services composed of the perceptions of interviewees. They are not case studies, but simply illustrations.
4.4.1 Focus group views

The focus group participants agreed that the PhD was something you needed to do for yourself first (see also vignette 3). They did not think it would necessarily make a difference in the way they were perceived by their patrons:

But in terms of, say, who we're dealing with and the perception of us? I don't think it would necessarily make any difference, you know? Yeah, I would think you need to do it for yourself first. (28:50) F4, university

Intriguingly, they could see a role for the PhD in public libraries (none of them worked in one).

They also stressed that the PhD in LIS might not be the specialisation needed in a library, unless you did research on special collections, where it could be beneficial when publicising and making available previously underused or unknown material, which also featured in vignette 2. In a small country like Ireland, librarians needed broader skill sets and a PhD might be too limiting.

One possible use of the PhD in an academic library related to personal attitude. The librarian might have more empathy and would understand what PhD students were going through. Arising from that, they could provide better support to them. This corresponds with vignette 2:

Possibly in an academic library, you might have more empathy and more feeling, more, you know, to know what PhD students are going through. And perhaps you can provide better support to them because of what you have done. (39:57; italic denotes emphasis) F1, private academic institution

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A focus group member who had been enrolled in doctoral studies in the past, but did not finish them, highlighted how they processed that unhappy experience in their day job (which fits with vignettes 2 and 3):

I can really see, and, you know, I have used the benefit of my own studies to assist my patrons in the past, and I've helped PhD students, and I've guided them, because of what happened to me, I have a huge world of experience of how to narrow down your research, how to focus on your bibliography, all the different things. So all the things that I know weren't there for me, I now put into their help or, you know, have guided them in certain way. (21:40) F3, membership organisation

On a positive note, the participants praised their colleagues who had PhDs or were currently studying for one for sharing their knowledge, especially their pedagogical knowhow, when it came to offering library teaching sessions:

…and I think brings a certain amount of benefit, because we do love teaching, and she's very generous with her knowledge. (32:33) F2, IT

Participants also mentioned the role of the doctorate when designing libraries, where you would need to conduct ethnographic research in order to establish the community the library will serve. This dovetailed with vignette 1:

I think, if you were, you know, that there’s something in that as well, that is an area like that planning or design, there could be a PhD. Now there could be value in all sort of things because you’re learning so much, and you have to be an anthropologist as well in the middle of that, so there’s a huge, probably, learning opportunity there. (42:30) F2, IT

The next section of this thesis will appraise other insights into the experiences of participants on getting a job, support for the PhD and promotion, and some misperceptions the researcher had detected.
4.5. Employment, support and promotion

4.5.1 Employing librarians with doctorates

When asked about their current duties and visions for their respective libraries, the managers all exhibited a strong service orientation and a sense that the work needed to be aligned with the main organisation to help it achieve its goals. This manifested itself again when asked about their decisions behind employing PhD holders or supporting doctoral studies.

There were three different scenarios:

- Employees were hired specifically to fill certain roles, where a doctorate was an advantage;
- Other PhD graduates got a job because of their skills and knowledge in the library field and they just happened to have a doctorate on top of that;
- Librarians had been working in the institution for a while and then decided to do a doctorate.

This breakdown tallies with librarians’ experiences. Three had been working as information professionals before they started their doctorates. Three more had previous work experience and loved the library environment. Another three switched to librarianship after using libraries and archives during their studies, which they described as ‘moving to the other side of the desk’ (Int. 9) and ‘I jumped over the counter’ (Int. 3). And one interviewee saw the PhD as one more step to becoming a librarian:

I was offered it and I jumped at it, the reason being, essentially, was that it was [mentions subject area] and I was still on my road to being a librarian! So it wasn’t going to be a waste in that.” (04:30) Int. 7, special/research
Others commented, however, that it was ‘a mixed bag’ or ‘a mixed blessing’: they were overqualified for some jobs, but felt that at other times the PhD could push them over the line because they had this additional qualification.

The focus group participants saw potential roles for PhD holders in libraries where a specific depth of knowledge was needed, but queried its usefulness in a school library. A one-size-fits-all qualification was not a realistic scenario in the library world, according to their view. They also warned about what they saw a devaluation of the MLIS and other qualifications, if more people were pushed into doing a PhD. If there was a proper structure put in place by the government to counteract any such demotion, they could foresee the establishment of another grade of ‘professional librarian’.

### 4.5.2 Support for PhD studies

Seven employers were currently supporting their employees with their PhD studies or have done so in the past: five offered both study leave and financial help, two provided only time off. Four had not received any applications but would support employees with at least study leave. Some employers were currently aiding with other degrees, such as the MLIS. In some cases, they reported resistance from HR to extend help to PhD level, because it was feared that people would not finish or leave straight after graduation.
The librarians painted a differentiated picture: six were not working at the time of enrolment (or working part-time), so received no support from an employer, but they had full or partial scholarships; one secured leave of absence from their employer and a scholarship from their university; one got leave, but no funding (they were sent later to do the MLIS); and one was self-funding with a part-time job and no study leave.

Participants in the focus group added that the standard of living would have to be maintained if mature librarians were asked to sign up to doctoral studies. They had concerns about compatibility with family life.

4.5.3 Promotion

Librarians were quite united in their views on promotion. A doctorate might improve job prospects but, in most cases, would only be counted as ‘additional expertise’. They also noted that there was a glass ceiling in all organisations. A person would have to move into management or different roles within the organisation to move upwards (some employers also mentioned this scenario). But this would not suit many of the PhD holders, who relished ‘being at the coalface’.

The focus group completely agreed with this view: they enjoyed their current interaction with their patrons and did not want to ‘move up the food chain’. They would only do a PhD out of personal interest. There was unease among the focus group who had heard of colleagues being told not to mention their qualifications as they would seem overqualified for the position.
Managers also saw limited value of the PhD as a tool for promotion, unless librarians were interested in moving into a managerial role:

> And maybe don't want to be a library manager, like me, and here today, doing bills, they want to be out there on the front line and their doctorate, they see their doctorate as an advantage. So we need to open our mind about the positioning of PhDs in libraries. (25:00), Int. 2, academic (other)

There was a promotional track in two libraries, but the benchmark was the MLIS, not a PhD. Several managers mentioned the need to upgrade staff and themselves and that were more interested in converting their Post Graduate Diploma into a Master’s degree. The fact that some senior library managers in Ireland had a PhD was pointed out by some interviewees and the focus group.

### 4.6 Use of nominals

This had come up organically in six of the interviews: all reported being uneasy with appending a ‘Dr.’ or ‘PhD’ to their name.

> I kind of felt I've got two things. One is, I had this particular academic qualification, and that's through historical coincidence of that entitles you to certain letters [...] The other thing was that I feel it shouldn't matter. People should deal with my queries and my replies on the basis of what my career is and my replies are. (27:10) Int. 3, academic (university)

Interestingly, all add their nominals occasionally when they presented at a conference, but also when they wanted to make a point about patronising behaviour by others. One interviewee felt that it made a difference because their role title was unclear; another one noted that it was useful in the ‘pecking order’, so that they would be able to get closer to where they wanted to be.
Two librarians were encouraged to use ‘Dr.’ by line managers or colleagues to be seen as equal to academic staff and to be noticed within and valued by the organisation.

The employers also saw advantages: by introducing the librarian as ‘Dr. so-and-so’ to visiting dignitaries, one manager elaborated on the exposure the library would get on television. Others noted how students would take notice and hold that librarian in higher esteem.

4.7 Summary of chapter

The first part of chapter 4 has brought together the different ways in which participants perceived of the role of the doctorate in their respective environments: Three distinct categories of descriptions were established for each of the two cohorts of interviewees: ‘providing a better service’, ‘being an expert’ and ‘developing as a person’. Surprisingly, both sets overlapped. Four dimensions of variations were uncovered: ‘skills’, ‘personal attributes’, ‘motivation’ and ‘benefit’. These were identical for both groups, but with diverging priorities. The second part built on this knowledge by creating vignettes, which illustrated the merged outcome spaces and further described the impact on library services for each of the three scenarios. This data was enriched by the experience shared by the focus group. The last part examined some other topics of debate. The chapter that follows will review the results of this study with the findings of other research projects.
5. Discussion

What do these findings mean? This chapter will now look at aspects of the results and link them to the existing literature. It will list several advantages and disadvantages of having a doctorate when working in a library, concentrating on relationships with others, service provision and personal circumstances. Furthermore, it will look at the debate on PhD skills versus librarian skills, the place of other subject based PhDs in libraries, and some misperceptions about doing a doctorate.

5.1 The doctorate as a bonus

5.1.1 Credibility with stakeholders

Gilman and Lindquist's (2010) survey of North American academic librarians with PhDs found that, in order of descending importance, the following advantages were mentioned: credibility with the teaching faculty, subject expertise, ability to relate to academic users and in-depth understanding of the research process. This corresponds with category 2 (librarian cohort) in the present study, which stressed the role of the PhD in embedding the librarian within the wider research community.

5.1.2 Improved library services

McCluskey Dean (2017) examined her own experience of doing a part-time professional doctorate in Information Science. She found that doing a literature review as a practising librarian was easy, but that she could now relate better to her research students struggling with technology. All categories in the librarian cohort accentuated the fact that the skills learned through the PhD had positive ramifications for the services in the library.
Categories 2 and 3 (in the librarian cohort) in particular stressed transmission of knowledge between librarian and patrons.

Why do employers take on doctorate holders? Managers in both public and private non-academic organisations taking part in a survey by Haapakorpi (2017) mentioned foremost the enhancement of the professional credibility of the organisation, to strengthen the research and development activities as well as increased collaboration with universities through personal networks of the researcher. Categories 1 and 2 (employer cohort) in the present study confirmed similar reasons.

From the librarians’ perspective, being invited onto research committees (category 1) and being co-authors on papers with academics (as happened in category 2) allowed them to establish new services. This mirrored some of the findings from a survey by Hoffmann, Berg and Koufogiannakis (2017), who listed factors that correlated with enabling librarians to become successful researchers in their respective libraries: individual attributes, peers and community as well as institutional structures and support. There was an overwhelming desire to have a supportive institutional environment for research.

By contrast, in another study, personal rewards seemed to be the main reasons why academic librarians engaged in non-LIS scholarship and publishing: they felt higher levels of personal satisfaction, had better work relationships, enjoyed producing scholarly work and creating art, and presenting at conferences, even when they had little support from their employer (Thomas & Leonard, 2014). In the present study, category 3 (both cohorts) supports these findings: doing research for personal fulfilment and satisfaction tended to make employees with PhDs happier. Their positive attitude helped attracting new patrons.
5.1.3 Personal motivations

What motivated librarians to undertake the doctorate? In Hands’ (2018) study on students pursuing the doctoral degree in library and information science, five motivating factors were identified: research-related interests, previous educational experiences, preparation for the future, appeal of the scholarly environment, and encouragement from respected others (p. 17). Although all of the librarians partaking in this study did or were doing a non-LIS doctorate, their reasons were quite similar, but, additionally, ‘personal enrichment’ featured strongly. Personal outcomes motivated part-time research students in Education in Butterfield’s (1997) study with achieving ‘better understanding’ being mentioned the most.

For some librarians in the present study there was an almost accidental element to it, which they related back to the economic crisis and a lack of jobs when they had finished their undergraduate degrees. One manager also mused about the fact that the uptake in PhD studies seemed to follow the economic cycle.

The next section will investigate some of the disadvantages to the doctorate in the library.
5.2 The doctorate as a drawback

5.2.1 Personal relationships

The perception of the PhD might also be affected by the behaviour of the holder. One employer recalled one such incident where arrogant behaviour clouded the work achievements of that librarian. Another reflected on how people could feel threatened by someone who has a PhD, and how they could make certain assumptions about how these doctoral graduates were going to be as a colleague. There might also be a fear that they could receive rewards (such as funding to attend a conference) because of the PhD. None of which was true, but this revealed insecurities on behalf of colleagues without a doctorate.

The librarians had some experience of that, but the general consensus was that it was up to them to show themselves as team players and hard workers, as one librarian among many. They did encounter, however, instances where colleagues (wrongly) thought they knew everything about research methods.

The focus group librarians were split about the use of their own (non-PhD) nominals: one female participant talked about how it helped her gain respect when she was patronised by male students. They also pointed out that the use of ‘Dr.’ could be intimidating for the students, who did not want to talk to another academic, but to someone who could help them.
5.2.2 Negative personal experiences

Some of the interviewees talked about the strains of doing a PhD. Several factors were mentioned, including financing the degree, time pressures and the burden on family and social life. A survey of social science doctoral students in Spain also reported ‘balance between work or personal life and doctoral studies’ as the main reason for dropping out (Castelló, Pardo, Sala-Bubaré, & Sune-Soler, 2017). ‘Resources’, which comprised of funding, time and training for research, was only ranked fourth in terms of importance.

Mental health issues also came up during the interviews, with one librarian revealing that they had paid a heavy price. Interviewees stressed that a PhD was a hard thing to do and a slog. The emotional impact of dropping out of a PhD was mentioned by two focus group participants. Years later they still felt frustration about the perceived lack of support. Willis and Carmichael (2011) reported on the negative emotions encountered by the interviewees in their study on PhD dropouts, including disappointment, regret and anger. They linked these feelings back to the lack of control their participants had experienced.

Feelings of isolation and imposter syndrome, thinking what they were doing was not good enough, were also reported by the librarians. Some had also experienced writer’s block. Research conducted among Finnish doctoral students revealed how they perceived of the scholarly community: positive feelings of empowerment lead to engagement, but negative views to stress, exhaustion, and anxiety. In order to make life easier for them, Stubb, Pyhältö and Lonka (2011) recommended paying attention to PhD students and accepting them as junior members of the academic community.
5.3 PhD skills versus librarian skills

One topic that came out strongly in the data was that of the ‘identity as a librarian’. It was very evident when participants talked about skills: some felt that ‘librarian skills’ were more important regarding the development of services, yet others claimed that these skills could be picked up by simply being a practitioner.

As outlined above, there was a strong link between skills learned through the PhD and their application in the day job (dimension of variation ‘skills’). Mowbray and Halse (2010) categorised PhD skills as ‘developing personal resourcefulness’ (in the present study evident in category 3 in both cohorts), ‘developing cognition’ (central here were critical thinking skills) and ‘developing research and other skills’.

At the same time, however, librarians and managers alike pointed out that good librarian skills had nothing to do with having a PhD. The focus group discussants felt strongly about the identity issue and what made a good librarian. They pointed out how librarianship was about people and how you connect with them. Soft skills, such as being welcoming and approachable, would be more important. The academic qualifications would be a backup giving the theory behind it. This standpoint seems to be endorsed by those who recruit library personnel. Cullen and Kavanagh (2006), who analysed Irish recruitment data over a six-year timeframe, pointed to the strong preference for applicants to have good communication and interpersonal skills. This view was also endorsed by senior administrators working in five academic libraries in the US in a report by Jaguszewski and Williams (2013).
They cited those soft skills as crucial and that other knowledge can be obtained through experience and training. Their workplace requirements now included:

- capacity to cultivate trusted relationships with faculty and others,
- the ability to engage and thrive in the messy and ambiguous,
- aptitude for systems thinking, an ability to connect research and learning, and skills including political savvy, analytical and problem-solving skills, program development, conflict fluency, civility, and strong leadership (Jaguszewski & Williams, 2013, p. 14).

5.4 The place of other subject-based PhDs

Historically, there has always been a debate about whether a subject or LIS PhD would be the most appropriate terminal degree. Wilson (1939) advocated strongly for librarians working in the university sector to embark on PhDs in LIS. During the following decades, however, subject PhDs became more desirable (Miller, 1976). Back in 1976, Miller reported on a survey conducted among ninety-two large university libraries on that matter. Library directors responding overwhelmingly chose the subject PhD. Reporting on an apparent influx of other PhDs into librarianship, Miller suggested that libraries represented opportunities for ‘displaced’ academics during the job crisis in the 70s. Richmond (1957) traced this move back to holders of subject PhDs’ own positive experiences of libraries while teaching or researching or because they might want to escape academia. Over 60 years later, these reasons still ring true. The present study found that none of the librarians, who all held other subject-based PhDs, wanted to move (back) into academia or have a purely academic job. They all had found their niche in a library. Some had friends who had become academics and who then lamented on the pressures experienced in the academic environment.
5.5 Misperceptions regarding the PhD process

Some misperceptions regarding what doctoral studies entailed were observed. The focus group discussants looked at the taught PhD model and recommended qualifications which could feed into each other: if someone did a year of academic study, they would get a Certificate, two years a Diploma, three years would allow them a Master’s, with the PhD awarded after that. So the doctorate would be an add-on to a postgraduate Master’s. This, of course, did not represent the reality of the scope and work of a doctorate.

This confusion could perhaps be explained by the increased availability and marketing of professional doctorates. Scott, Brown, Lunt and Thorne (2004) offered a comprehensive overview of the historical developments leading to the introduction of professional doctorates, which they traced back to changes in the professions:

This therefore mandated professional doctorates to develop higher-order competences or ‘meta-competences’ to assist the professional in moving beyond the immediate, time- and context-bound work setting, standing back and taking an enhanced professional perspective on the work. (Scott et al., 2004, p. 141).

The interest in these qualifications is clearly on the rise, but investigations as to their effect on practice and the research work that is required to succeed still seem to be lacking. Hawkes and Yerrabati (2018) recently conducted a systemic review of 193 academic papers on research on professional doctorates, specifically the Doctor in Education (EdD). They identified two significant gaps in the literature: wider impact of professional doctorates and the research phase of the EdD (thesis and role of the supervisor).
These misunderstandings will need to be addressed if we want to attract more people into LIS PhD studies.

5.6 Summary of chapter

This chapter has examined some of the advantages and disadvantages of the PhD in the library workplace as evident from the data and compared them with the relevant literature. Findings ranged from enhanced credibility with stakeholders and better library services to personal motivations and experiences, not all of them positive. The skills of librarians were compared to those gained through the PhD by some respondents. The place of subject based doctorates in the library also came up. The section also highlighted how the process of doing a PhD was misunderstood by practicing librarians. The next chapter will recommend some ways of remediation of these misconceptions.
6. Conclusions

The study aimed to explore the value of holding a doctorate for information professionals in Ireland and for the services they provide. This led to two research questions:

- What are the perceptions of librarians and employers of the value of having a doctorate?
- How does having a doctorate impact on library services?

This final chapter will look at the wider implications of the findings of this thesis. It will list some recommendations for policy and practice and outline ideas for future research. A short summary of my personal reflections is also included.

6.1. Summary of main findings

This sub section summarises the findings in relation to the research questions.

6.1.1 The role of the doctorate in the library

Depending on the category, the place of the PhD was experienced as follows:

**Librarians**

1. A PhD helps with service improvement in the library;
2. Having a PhD means becoming or being a subject expert;
3. The PhD is a form of professional development.
Employers

1. A PhD helps changing perceptions of the library (and of the LIS profession) and its services;
2. Having a PhD means an employee has become a subject expert;
3. The PhD has led to personal growth of the employee.

6.1.2 PhD impact on library services

Different perceptions also influenced the perceived impact on library services:

1. PhD as transformative tool for growing future library services by elevating librarians and the LIS profession;
2. The PhD confers academic skills on the individual and this feeds into educational processes within the organisation;
3. The PhD is a testament to personal achievement, which may be used for improving library services.

6.2 Implications for policy and practice

This diversity of views has, of course, implications for future policy directions of the LIS academic community as well as for the profession. The research aim was to explore the value of holding a doctorate to information professionals and its impact on current, but also future, library service offers. The findings point to one fundamental predicament, which goes to the core of this dissertation and which will be highlighted in this section: the value and status of the doctorate in LIS itself. Librarians with other subject PhDs are, evidently, successful and competent, but this issue seems be at the heart of the debate between LIS (practical) skills versus PhD (academic) skills.
6.2.1 Few graduates with PhDs in LIS

Whether or not someone is undertaking a doctorate still seems to be a personal choice. Scholarships in LIS, though increasingly available, are not sufficient to sustain a student, which means that most would have to work at least part-time. Interestingly, none of the librarians nor any of the employers interviewed held a PhD in LIS. Those who started a PhD in LIS would be part of a very select group, with numbers in Ireland still very low (see 1.4. above).

Even in bigger populations, having a PhD as a librarian is quite unusual. In 2018, a census was conducted by the Canadian Association of Professional Librarians (CAPAL) among its member institutions. Out of a sample group of 1827, they received 920 completed responses, which means that half of the targeted librarians had responded. 52 of these held a PhD with nine in LIS (Canadian Association of Professional Librarians, 2019). The CAPAL figures showed how few LIS professionals possess a doctorate.

6.2.2 LIS doctors in the workplace

This begs the question of how we will proceed as a profession, if we have so few doctorates in our field and none, with a few exceptions, working as professional librarians. Are we educating our few doctoral LIS students in Ireland to work in academia only? As the evidence from this study shows they are not moving into the profession.

It could be argued that the viability of LIS as an academic subject depends on its relevancy to the profession. No doubt, this will be part of a wider, ongoing debate, the continued self-examination happening in LIS.
As van Patten recognised in 1939:

Librarianship cannot gain recognition as a profession by continued assertion and protest. Professional status can be acquired by accomplishment, and accomplishment in librarianship is not a matter of improving technical processes, collecting statistics, and worrying too much in public about salaries and prestige (van Patten, 1939, p. 35).

The European Association for Library & Information Education and Research (EUCLID), an independent governmental and non-profit organisation promoting cooperation between LIS education and research, advocated that “a PhD in LIS should prepare doctoral students for high level teaching and training positions, but field employability should not be excluded” (n.d., p. 1). Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) elaborated even further on the standards expected of a doctoral graduate: “The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training” (2014, p. 9). IFLA, on the other hand, only had the following non-descript advice to offer “Library/information programmes should be eligible to offer doctoral level study on the same basis as other programmes.”

In summary, the case could be made for more LIS PhD graduates to move (back) into the library environment and therefore become a bridge between practice and academia by being practitioner-researchers: “… a librarian who decides to do the PhD and chooses topics from her practice to delve into” (Wilson, 2013, p. 112).
6.3 Recommendations for policy and practice

The hope is that there will always be a place for the LIS PhD – both in academia and in the library workplace. The following sections outlines some thoughts on how to improve current practice.

6.3.1 Supporting LIS PhD candidates

Individuals who wish to pursue doctoral studies will have to continue competing for a limited amount of scholarships. The LAI is currently not in a position to finance potential PhD candidates. As a voluntary organisation, which receives no state monies and relies heavily on its subscription fees, it has limited funds. There are, however, other ways of supporting LIS professionals who have embarked on a postgraduate research degree. In my position as chair of the CPD committee I propose developing a policy, which outlines professional development opportunities for LIS researchers. These could include, for example, promotion of grants and travel subsistence schemes run by state agencies, research conferences organised by sister organisations, and invitation of doctoral candidates as speakers at LAI's conferences.

6.3.2 Catching new talent

A number of librarians and managers suggested more screening at Master student level to find potential PhD candidates in order to spot talent early. Additionally, people already working in libraries might be interested in other types of doctorates, e.g. PhD by Publication.
The LAI should nourish a culture of research by hosting informal gatherings that allow for debate and exchange of ideas. This could be arranged easily at low cost, ideally in conjunction with the library schools, especially with UCD. Several library employers expressed an interest in pursuing a doctorate as a result of their interview. They all knew about the researcher’s PhD, and some asked questions about it and sought the researcher’s advice. Talking about the research other people were doing seemed to (re)ignite a spark. This was an unintended outcome, but one that the researcher very much encouraged.

Another suggestion that came up during a few interviews was running a workshop for students and practising librarians, where PhD holders could outline the different steps involved in gaining a doctorate – a mentoring programme was also mentioned. The researcher has plans to build on this goodwill within the LAI community in the near future. The findings of this study will be disseminated in the professional literature, such as ‘An Leabharlann’, the journal of the LAI, and possibly also international open-access periodicals.

6.4 Future research

This was a small-scale study confined by the regulations pertaining to dissertation length. It is hoped that it will inform LAI policy, but in order to strengthen the results presented here, a bigger research project could help shed more light:

- If funding was available, the LAI could conduct a national survey to be sent to all librarians in Ireland to find out their views on the role of a doctorate. They might also have ideas on how library services could be enhanced.
- Additionally, certain topics might emerge that could lead to more interest in doing a PhD. The library schools could also profit: this data could help them with sourcing finance from government.
- This study could then be linked to developing a campaign targeting employers to show how libraries could make better use of PhD holders’ skills and knowledge.
- A comparison with countries with similar populations (e.g. New Zealand) to see how they support PhDs in the library environment could help influence policy here. Alternatively, researchers in other countries might be interested in an international joint project.

Another study could employ more focus groups and interviews. It would be interesting to contrast the perceptions of those working in libraries with those of their patrons:

- Are there any similarities or opposing views?
- How could the knowledge and skills of a PhD holder be better integrated in library services?

These are just some ideas for taking this study further.

6.5 Personal reflections

This study provided many opportunities for learning. I had never conducted a focus group before, but felt that it had gone well, with lively debates and a rich amount of data resulting from it. Had I to do it again, however, I would probably engage a second researcher who could record gestures, facial expressions and overall body language. Focus groups have tradition in libraries, as evidenced in the bibliography compiled by Walden (2006).
I can see the potential for using one in my own library and feel more comfortable now in conducting them.

Data collection and analysis were inevitably shaped by the theoretical framework of the study. Undoubtedly, other approaches would have provided a different focus on how participants perceived of the role of the doctorate. A case study, for example, would link participants to their type of library. Interviewing an employer, their PhD librarian and some of their colleagues would provide an interesting angle. I feel, however, that the present study provides a good starting point for further discussion.

My own position within the Irish library community influenced this research project. It originated in personal experiences, but also had professional dimensions: colleagues from other libraries participated in the study and recommendations were made for the Irish professional body. Inevitably, other researchers would gain different insights.

6.6. Final words

It is noticeable that things have moved on since Bates gave this advice to potential LIS PhD candidates in 1986: “… the point of getting a doctorate is to prepare you for a new career [university teaching and research; E. H.], not to make you more qualified for the career you have” (p. 157).
To quote one of the employers (int. 20):

And you say to yourself, I know I’ve said to myself, ‘if that idiot can do a PhD, I can do a PhD’. Or ‘why do we spend all of our time supporting other people for achievement?’ We can still do that, but we can do that for ourselves, we have the skills, we need to do it ourselves.

And to quote another one (int. 2):

I think if ever there was a time for the sector to embrace the culture of the PhD, it’s now!

The present study agrees and argues that there is a place for the doctorate in EVERY type of library.
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APPENDIX A
CALLS FOR PARTICIPATION

Employers:
Do you employ librarians who hold either a PhD or a professional doctorate?
Are you based in the Republic of Ireland?
Would you be able to grant a fellow librarian one hour of your valuable time for an interview?

I am interested in employers’ views on the value of having staff who are holding a doctorate. Because of the reflective nature of this project, you might gain some personal and professional benefits. All the information you give me will be kept strictly confidential and neither you nor your organisation will be identifiable. This study has been approved of by the ethics review committee of the School of Education at Trinity College Dublin. If you like to know more about this project or know of someone who might be interested, please contact me, Eva Hornung, by email at ehornung@tcd.ie or by phone: 087-2343406. I am based in Dublin and can travel to any place in Ireland at a date that suits you. Thank you for taking the time to read this!

Librarians:
Are you a librarian who holds either a PhD or a professional doctorate?
Do you currently work in a library/information centre or have you recently done so?
Are you based in the Republic of Ireland?
Would you be able to grant a fellow librarian one hour of your valuable time for an interview?

I am interested in librarians’ views on the value of holding a doctorate. Because of the reflective nature of this project, you might gain some personal and professional benefits. All the information you give me will be kept strictly confidential and neither you nor your organisation will be identifiable. This study has been approved of by the ethics review committee of the School of Education at Trinity College Dublin. If you like to know more about this project or know of someone who might be interested, please contact me, Eva Hornung, by email at ehornung@tcd.ie or by phone: 087-2343406. I am based in Dublin and can travel to any place in Ireland at a date that suits you. Thank you for taking the time to read this!
APPENDIX B

EXAMPLE OF INFORMATION SHEET

Project title:  Do we need a doctor in the library?
Perceptions of the role and place of the doctoral qualification in Library and Information Services in Ireland

Principal Investigator: Dr. Eva Hornung, School of Education, Trinity College Dublin

To:  Experienced librarians

You are being contacted about this study as you have been identified as a librarian, who has many years of post-qualification experience and works with colleagues who hold a doctorate. This research seeks to explore experiences and perceptions of the library community in Ireland regarding the roles of library staff with a doctorate and their place within the organisation.

You are invited to take part in a focus group with four to seven other librarians. I would like to find out about

• The value of having a doctorate in terms of a library career
• The impact of librarians with doctorates on the service you provide
• The role of doctorates within the wider LIS community

Additionally, I plan to conduct semi-structured interviews with librarians who hold doctorates (either a PhD or a professional doctorate) as well as library employers. My findings will be presented in my thesis, which forms part of the Master of Education (Higher Education) programme.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you may ask to withdraw your consent at any time up until 10 days following the interview. The focus group will take place in xxx library on 12th April 2019 at 5.30 p.m. and is expected to last around an hour. If you want to, I can send you a list of possible interview questions; you are also welcome to suggest your own. Your views will be anonymous; that is, your real name will NOT be
used in either the dissertation or any subsequent publication/conference paper. I will ensure that direct quotes and other information are used in such a way that you cannot be identified as the source. There are no known risks from being involved in this research. Also, you will not benefit personally, but, because of the reflective nature of this project, I hope that participants will gain some new insights.

The focus group will be digitally recorded and later transcribed by me. If you wish, I can send you a copy of the transcript. You can request changes within 10 days of receipt. The interview data (digital recording and transcript) will be stored electronically on a password-protected and encrypted laptop to which only I will have access. My supervisor and examiners may read the anonymised transcripts. Any paper-based data will be stored in a locked and secure box. All data will be destroyed/deleted in accordance with the School of Education’s (Trinity College Dublin) ethical guidelines.

Thank you for your help. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

For any ethical concerns contact: The Chair, The School of Education Research Ethics Committee (REC) http://www.tcd.ie/Education/ethics/ Approval granted 28th November 2018

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<th>Supervisor name and contact info</th>
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APPENDIX C

EXAMPLE OF CONSENT FORM

Project title: Do we need a doctor in the library? Perceptions of the role and place of the doctoral qualification in Library and Information Services in Ireland

Researcher: Eva Hornung, Curriculum Development Unit, School of Education, TCD

To: Interviewees

The purpose of this interview is to explore experiences and perceptions of the library community in Ireland regarding the roles of library staff with a doctorate and their place within the organisation. It will last approximately 30 minutes. The data collected will be used in the researcher’s thesis, which forms part of the Master of Education (Higher Education) programme with Trinity College Dublin.

I agree to take part in this research. I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.

I understand that:

- My participation in this study is entirely voluntary.
- I may withdraw from the interview at any stage without giving any reasons.
- I may ask to have my interview data withdrawn at any time up until 10 days following the interview.
- The interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed by the researcher.
- If I want to, I will be sent a transcription of the interview and given 10 days to request changes.
- My interview is anonymous; I understand that my real name will NOT be used in the assignment.
• Sound files will be stored on the researcher’s laptop until the thesis has been marked by the examiners. This laptop is in a locked cupboard in the researcher’s apartment.
• The data will be destroyed after the thesis has been marked by the examiners.

Name (print): __________________________________________

Date: _________________________________________________

Signature: ____________________________________________

*Ethics approval granted 28th November 2018*
APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE LIBRARIANS

Do we need a doctor in the library?
Perceptions of the role and place of the doctoral qualification in Library and Information Services in Ireland

Interview questions for librarians

(Demographics: gender, age bracket, nationality; years of experience as a librarian and researcher; type of library they are working in; type of doctorate; when completed; full-time/part-time; level of funding and other supports by employer/scholarship (if applicable))

1. Describe briefly your academic background (including the topic and subject area of your doctorate), your current position as a librarian and primary research interest(s).

2. Tell me about your decision to pursue a doctorate.

3. What, to you, is the role of a doctorate?

4. How did your qualification impact on getting a job? On being considered for a promotion?

5. How have you used the skills you gained in your workplace?

6. Can you describe an occasion in your workplace when you felt the doctorate made an impact (positive or negative) to the service you provide? How?

7. How does having a doctorate affect your relationship with your employer? And with your colleagues?

8. Looking at the future: how do you see the role of those in the library with PhDs?

9. In your experience, what is place of the PhD of librarians with a PhD within the library profession?

10. Are there any “nuggets of wisdom” you wished you had known at the beginning of your doctoral journey? If yes, would you please share them with me?

11. Anything else to add?

Thank you for your time!
APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE EMPLOYERS

Do we need a doctor in the library?

Perceptions of the role and place of the doctoral qualification in Library and Information Services in Ireland

Interview questions for employers

(Demographics: years of experience as a librarian and as an employer (and as researcher, if applicable); background on their education; background on the institution – number of employees; how many hold a doctorate?)

1. Describe briefly your current position as library manager: duties, vision for the organisation.

2. What, to you, is the role of a doctorate?

3. Tell me about your decision to employ librarians with a doctorate.

4. Have you supported employees who wished to pursue a PhD? If yes, how?

5. Can you describe an occasion in your workplace when you felt having employees with a doctorate made a contribution (positive or negative) to the service you provide? How?

6. How does having an employee with a PhD affect your relationship with them? And with their colleagues?

7. How would a doctorate impact on an individual’s career with your organisation?

8. In your experience, what is place of the PhD within the library profession?

9. Are there any “nuggets of wisdom” you wished you had known at the beginning of your career as a manager? If yes, would you please share them with me?

10. Anything else to add?

Thank you for your time!

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APPENDIX F
BACKGROUND FORM FOCUS GROUP

Do we need a doctor in the library?

Perceptions of the role and place of the doctoral qualification in Library and Information Services in Ireland

Background information from the focus group participants

About you:
Gender:
Age bracket:
Qualifications:
Years of experience as a librarian:

Describe briefly your current position as a librarian:
- Do you work full-time or part-time?
- What are your main duties?
- What type of library do you work in?
- How many employees does your library have?
- Do any of your colleagues in your current job hold a PhD or professional doctorate? If yes, how many?
APPENDIX G
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Do we need a doctor in the library?

Perceptions of the role and place of the doctoral qualification in Library and Information Services in Ireland

Focus group topic guide

1. Introduction:
- who I am
- what this study is about
- what we will be discussing today – please draw on your own experience and also engage in ‘blue sky thinking’!
- confidentiality
- permission to tape record
- what will happen with the information

2. Scenario:
Imagine the following scenario: There is a new directive coming from the government. Targets have been set, and the expectation is that by year 2030 all qualified librarians should have a professional doctorate or a PhD.

3. Facilitators and barriers:
What and who would make that happen (facilitators)?
What would we need to do as a profession?
What would make that hard to achieve (barriers)?

4. Likely impact:
How, do you think, would that impact on different types of libraries?
On your own workplace?

On a different institution you are familiar with?

What would be different in the library?

New colleagues?

How would they fit in?

What roles could they do?

How would that change library services?

How would that impact on the landscape of libraries in Ireland?

5. New scenario:

A new report is published after a number of years into this initiative. It states that we are not getting the numbers intended.

How can we attract more people to do this? What are the ‘carrots’?

6. End of focus group

Sum up

Ask for any final comments

Thanks for participation

7. Debrief

Review and evaluate process and content

Expand on notes