

Reimagining Library Services: Transforming Libraries into Dynamic Learning Spaces in South African Universities

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ABSTRACT

This conceptual paper aimed to explore the transformation of university libraries in South Africa into dynamic learning spaces that cater to evolving academic and social needs of students. In the context of South Africa's rapidly changing higher education landscape, where inclusivity and technological advancements are paramount, the role of university libraries is shifting from traditional information repositories to hubs of collaborative learning and student engagement. The paper employed a qualitative review of literature and an analysis of the existing infrastructures in libraries of Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs) to identify strategies for this transformation. The findings highlighted the pivotal role libraries play in promoting lifelong learning, enhancing digital literacy, and supporting academic success. Key recommendations include the integration of advanced technology, the creation of flexible, student-centred spaces, and the incorporation of inclusive practices to accommodate diverse student populations. This paper contributes to ongoing research by offering a model for reimagining library spaces in line with global trends, providing insights for other educational institutions seeking to foster dynamic, student-focused learning environments.

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INTRODUCTION

University libraries have long been essential to academic life, serving as central repositories of knowledge, supporting students and faculty in their pursuit of information. Traditionally, these spaces were defined by their quiet, structured environments, primarily facilitating individual study and access to print resources. However, with the rapid advancement of digital technologies and the shifting landscape of higher education, the role of the library has begun to evolve globally. Modern university libraries are now seen as dynamic learning hubs that encourage collaboration, creativity, and the development of digital literacy skills.

This transition is especially significant in South Africa, where the higher education sector faces unique access, equity, and technological infrastructure challenges. Libraries in South African universities, particularly at Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs), are pressurised to adapt their services to meet the needs of increasingly diverse student populations.

These institutions must grapple with the dual demands of maintaining traditional academic resources while integrating new technologies to foster an inclusive, interactive, and technologically enriched learning environment. A key issue in this transformation is the balance between maintaining the

traditional quiet study spaces and incorporating more interactive, collaborative areas. There is also the question of digital inclusion, as many students come from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds with limited access to technology.

While libraries globally are embracing digital tools and platforms, South African institutions must address the digital divide to ensure equitable access to these resources. Likewise, the integration of technology raises concerns about staff training, resource allocation, and the ongoing financial sustainability of such initiatives in the local context. Given this backdrop, this article explores how university libraries in South Africa can be transformed to support a dynamic, inclusive learning environment.

By reviewing existing literature and analysing current library infrastructures at HDIs, this paper aims to offer strategies for redesigning library services in ways that foster collaboration, inclusivity, promote digital literacy, and support the academic success. The findings of this paper will contribute to ongoing efforts in higher education to reimagine library spaces and align them with global trends, providing a model for other institutions seeking to enhance their learning environments.

The gap this conceptual paper addresses is the disconnect between the traditional design and function of university libraries in South Africa and the evolving academic and social needs of contemporary students, especially in Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs). Despite the push towards inclusivity and technological advancement in higher education, many libraries in these institutions remain under-resourced, lacking modern infrastructure and flexible, student-centred spaces necessary for fostering collaborative and digital learning.

Specifically, the gap lies in the following areas:

- **Limited Adaptation to Modern Learning Needs:** Many university libraries still prioritise traditional, quiet study spaces over areas for collaboration, discussion, and active learning, which are increasingly essential for student engagement and skill development.
- **Inadequate Technology Integration:** Although digital literacy and technological fluency are critical in the modern academic and professional landscape, HDI libraries often lack the technology and resources to support these skills comprehensively.
- **Insufficient Inclusivity and Accessibility:** Traditional library layouts and resources may not cater to the diverse learning styles and accessibility needs of all students, especially those from various cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds.
- **Lack of Flexibility in Library Spaces:** The current library spaces may not accommodate flexible, multi-functional use, limiting opportunities for students to engage in diverse activities such as group work, creative projects, and access to multimedia resources.

This paper aims to address this gap by exploring strategies to transform libraries into dynamic, inclusive, and technology-enriched environments that better align with the needs of today's students.

METHODOLOGY

This conceptual paper employed a qualitative approach to review the literature and analysed existing infrastructures in libraries of HDIs to identify strategies for transformation. The methodology comprises three interrelated components: literature review, qualitative analysis of existing infrastructures, and strategy development. Literature was reviewed to explore the existing knowledge, theoretical frameworks, and documented challenges and successes concerning library transformation in HDIs. Sources reviewed were peer-reviewed journal articles, books, institutional reports, policy documents (e.g., national higher education frameworks), and case studies from HDIs. The review focuses on themes such as:

Historical context of library development in HDIs; Resource disparities between HDIs and well-resourced institutions. The role of libraries in supporting academic success in historically marginalised communities; Innovations and best practices in library transformation.

Qualitative Analysis of Existing Infrastructures

The objective was to examine the state of physical, technological, and human resources within libraries of HDIs. Thematic analysis was used to synthesise findings, highlighting gaps, challenges, and opportunities for transformation.

Strategy Development: The purpose was to propose actionable strategies for transforming libraries in HDIs based on findings from the literature and infrastructure analysis and to ensure that proposed strategies are relevant to the unique socio-economic and cultural contexts of HDIs. This paper relies on literature, which might limit insights into recent developments or undocumented initiatives in HDIs. The findings are conceptually derived and require empirical validation through field studies or stakeholder consultations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The traditional role of libraries as repositories/storehouses of knowledge is being transformed by technological advancements and changes in pedagogy.¹ Libraries are now seen as environments that support a broader range of learning activities, including group work, multimedia production, and digital literacy. This shift reflects a growing understanding that libraries must cater to diverse learning needs of students, particularly in the digital age.²

The development of technology has made traditional libraries face unprecedented challenges and impacts. In South Africa, the role of libraries is even more significant due to historical inequalities in access to educational resources. Libraries must evolve to provide equal access to information, support student success, and foster social inclusion. This indicates that University libraries must expand their services to become spaces where students can engage in collaborative learning, access digital tools, and develop the skills needed for the modern workforce. Literature is reviewed under themes:

Digital Technologies and Library Transformation

The integration of digital technologies has been a major driver of change in university libraries worldwide. The shift toward digital learning has expanded the role of libraries beyond their physical spaces.³ Libraries now offer online databases, digital resources, and virtual study environments that enable students to access information remotely. This is especially important in South Africa, where many students face challenges related to transportation, accommodation, and access to digital infrastructure.⁴

Mobile technology has made it easier for students to engage with library services, allowing libraries to provide mobile-friendly platforms that facilitate access to academic resources.⁵ South African universities must also address the digital divide, as many students from disadvantaged backgrounds lack access to reliable internet and digital devices. Libraries play a critical role in bridging this gap by providing access to computers, the internet, and other digital tools within their facilities. They have also begun incorporating multimedia labs, maker spaces, and technology hubs that allow students to engage in hands-on learning and creative projects.⁶ These spaces foster innovation and creativity, making libraries central to developing skills in digital literacy, media production, and collaboration. In South Africa, such spaces could provide students with opportunities to engage in practical, experiential learning that complements their academic studies.

¹ Lorcan Dempsey, *The Network Reshapes the Library: Lorcan Dempsey on Libraries, Services and Networks* (American Library Association, 2014).

² Weng Chunmeng, Cao Jinzhu, and Zhu Feiyun, "Research on Technology Empowerment in Digital Transformation of Library in Information Age," in *2019 International Conference on Computer, Information and Telecommunication Systems (CITS)* (IEEE, 2019), 1–5.

³ Milton D Cox, "Building and Enhancing Honors Programs through Faculty Learning Communities," *Breaking Barriers in Teaching and Learning*, 2018, 81–113.

⁴ Emma Smith, "Key Issues in Education and Social Justice," 2018.

⁵ Sthenjwa. Ngcobo, "Analysing the Synergy Between Strategic Plans of GPG Departments and Governments Economic Policy Priorities and Their Implementation" (University of Pretoria, 2017).

⁶ Robin E. Clark et al., "Risk Factors for Relapse and Higher Costs Among Medicaid Members with Opioid Dependence or Abuse: Opioid Agonists, Comorbidities, and Treatment History," *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment* 57 (October 2015): 75–80, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsat.2015.05.001>.

Inclusivity in Library Services

Inclusivity is a key theme in transforming university libraries, particularly in South Africa. Given the country's history of apartheid and the continuing disparities in access to education, libraries must promote social inclusion and serve as accessible learning spaces for all students.⁷ Libraries must be designed to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities, students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and those who may not have access to technology at home.

Inclusivity in library services can be achieved through the provision of accessible formats for learning materials, support services such as tutoring and academic advising, and spaces that encourage collaborative learning among diverse student groups.⁸ The importance of libraries is to support students who may feel marginalised within the broader university environment, providing them with a safe space for learning and social interaction. The concept of "ubuntu," which emphasises community and shared humanity, can also inform the design of inclusive learning spaces in South African libraries.⁹ Libraries can create environments that foster collaboration and peer learning, reflecting the cultural values of many South African communities. By promoting a sense of belonging and community, libraries can contribute to overall well-being and academic success of students.

Collaboration and Learning Spaces

Collaboration has become an essential aspect of modern education, and libraries are increasingly seen as spaces that facilitate group work, knowledge sharing, and peer learning.¹⁰ Libraries can encourage collaboration by offering flexible spaces that can be reconfigured for different learning activities. These spaces often include group study rooms, breakout areas, and technology-enhanced spaces where students can work together on projects or assignments.

In South Africa, where students often come from diverse educational and socio-economic backgrounds, collaborative learning spaces are particularly valuable.¹¹ Libraries can serve as neutral spaces where students from different backgrounds come together to learn and share knowledge. This is especially important in a country where many students may have attended under-resourced schools and need additional academic support to succeed at the university level.

Collaborative learning spaces also promote skills essential for success in the modern workforce, including teamwork, communication, and problem-solving. By creating environments that foster collaboration, libraries can help prepare students for the challenges they will face in their professional lives.

Challenges and Opportunities in the South African Context

One of the most significant challenges facing South African university libraries is the socio-economic disparity among students. Many students come from disadvantaged backgrounds and may not have access to the technology and resources needed for academic success.¹² Libraries can play a crucial role in levelling the educational playing field by providing access to computers, the internet, and digital resources. However, funding constraints present a major obstacle to the transformation of libraries in many South African universities.¹³ Many historically disadvantaged institutions lack the financial

⁷ Mabutho Sibanda et al., "Revisiting the Causal Link Between Agriculture, Industrial Output and Financial Sector Development in South Africa," *Journal of Reviews on Global Economics* 8 (March 2019): 1258–67, <https://doi.org/10.6000/1929-7092.2019.08.109>.

⁸ Lefa Letseka, "Exploring the Impact of Increasing Class Size on the Quality of Learning in Higher Education: Perspective of Students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal" (University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College, 2022).

⁹ Never Kondo, Grant Oosterwyk, and Jean-Paul Van Belle, "Factors Influencing the Adoption of Infrastructure as a Service by South African Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises," in *World Conference on Information Systems and Technologies* (Springer, 2022), 253–62.

¹⁰ Anita Mangan et al., "The Challenges of Police-Community Collaboration: Identity Manoeuvres and Power Struggles in a Neighbourhood Based Meeting," *Public Management Review* 20, no. 9 (September 2, 2018): 1353–73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2017.1383718>.

¹¹ N., Hoogendoorn, G., & Visser Masilela, "Cultural Tourism in South Africa: A Case Study of the Experiences of Employees.," *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure* 12, no. 1 (2023): 326–38.

¹² Vuyokazi Mntuyedwa, Moeketsi Letseka, and Johannes Cronje, "Implementation of a Multilingual Booklet to Accommodate First-Year Students with Academic Work," in *22nd European Conference on E-Learning: ECEL 2023* (Academic Conferences and publishing limited, 2023).

¹³ Milena I Tsvetkova, "България в Първата Книга На ЮНЕСКО За Затворническите Библиотеки," *BBIA Online* 9, no.6 (2019):42–44.

resources to invest in the latest technology or renovate outdated library spaces. This limits the ability of these libraries to fully support the needs of their students.

Opportunities for Innovation

Despite these challenges, there are significant opportunities for innovation in South African university libraries. The rapid growth of mobile technology and digital learning platforms provides libraries new ways to engage students. Mobile-friendly platforms and online resource portals allow students to access academic materials from anywhere, expanding the reach of library services beyond the physical campus.¹⁴

Libraries in South Africa are also uniquely positioned to blend traditional and modern learning approaches. The concept of ubuntu can inform the design of collaborative learning spaces that emphasize communal learning and knowledge sharing.¹⁵ By integrating local cultural values with modern educational practices, South African university libraries can create learning environments that are both innovative and inclusive. Following is the theoretical framework.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper draws from several educational and library science theories to provide a foundation for reimagining university libraries in South Africa as dynamic learning spaces. These spaces address inclusivity, technology integration, and collaborative learning while considering unique socio-economic, technological, and cultural factors in the South African higher education context.

Constructivist Learning Theory

At the core of transforming libraries into dynamic learning spaces is the constructivist learning theory.¹⁶ This theory posits that learners actively construct their knowledge through interactions with their environment, including social interactions with peers and engagement with resources. In a library context, collaborative learning environments are promoted, where students interact with each other to co-create knowledge. The library becomes a hub of active learning through discussions, group work, and projects, rather than just a space for solitary study.

Implications for libraries

Spaces need to be flexible and conducive to peer-to-peer learning and group collaborations. Traditional book stacks and reading rooms can be supplemented with technology-enhanced learning areas, breakout rooms, and communal workspaces.

Social Learning Theory

Bandura's Social Learning Theory emphasises learning as a social process, where individuals learn through observation, imitation, and modelling. University libraries can leverage this theory to foster environments that encourage group learning and social interaction. This is especially pertinent in South Africa, where students come from diverse backgrounds, and learning is often a community-driven effort.¹⁷ Wenger's theory, (1998) is crucial for understanding how libraries can create communities of practice where students and staff collaborate, share knowledge, and build learning communities.

Implications for libraries

Creating inclusive spaces where students from different backgrounds can learn from one another in informal or structured collaborative settings. Offering mentorship programs within the library, where senior students or academics guide new students in research, technology use, and academic skills.

¹⁴ Daryl G Smith, *Diversity's Promise for Higher Education: Making It Work* (Jhu Press, 2024).

¹⁵ Khamusi Ramudingane and Livhuwani Gladys Nkondo, "Challenges Encountered by SMMEs in Accessing Bank Credit: A Case of Vhembe District Municipality," *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science* (2147- 4478) 13, no. 5 (August 20, 2024): 503–12, <https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v13i5.3534>.

¹⁶ L Vygotsky and M Cole, "Lev Vygotsky: Learning and Social Constructivism," *Learning Theories for Early Years Practice*. UK: SAGE Publications Inc, 2018, 68–73.

¹⁷ Etienne Wenger, "A Social Theory of Learning," in *Contemporary Theories of Learning* (Routledge, 2009), 217–40.

Technology Integration and Digital Literacy Theories

Digital literacy has become a crucial skill for 21st-century learning. Drawing from Connectivism, which focuses on learning in the digital age, the framework recognises that learning occurs across a network of people, tools, and technology.¹⁸ Therefore, University libraries in South Africa must embrace digital tools and online resources that complement traditional library offerings. Must foster digital literacy through workshops, resources, and access to technologies like computers, tablets, and e-resources.

Implications for libraries

Integration of state-of-the-art technology (e.g., digital media labs, maker spaces, augmented reality, and virtual learning platforms). Providing resources for self-directed learning, allowing students to access materials and learn at their own pace, both online and offline.

Inclusive Pedagogy and Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

The concept of inclusive education is central to reimagining libraries in the South African context. Inclusive pedagogy and UDL emphasise the creation of environments that cater to all students, including those with disabilities, diverse learning styles, and socio-economic backgrounds. Libraries can ensure that spaces and resources are accessible to all students, including those with physical, visual, or cognitive impairments. Offer diverse learning materials, including audio-visual resources, assistive technologies, and multi-language resources, particularly relevant in multilingual and multicultural South Africa.

Implications for libraries

The design of library spaces should follow universally designed principles, ensuring that physical spaces and resources are accessible to everyone. Creation of multicultural learning environments that reflect South Africa's diverse student population and address their educational and social specific needs.

Lifelong Learning Theory

The concept of lifelong learning is a vital part of the evolving role of libraries.¹⁹ It is believed that adults learn differently from younger students, often seeking self-directed, problem-centred learning opportunities. Libraries, therefore, play an important role in fostering a culture of lifelong learning by offering continuous access to a range of learning resources that cater to varying academic levels, from undergraduate to postgraduate and beyond.

Implications for libraries

Libraries can act as lifelong learning centres by offering flexible learning spaces and access to a wide range of learning materials, including professional development resources, and upskilling workshops. They can provide online learning platforms that allow users to engage in self-directed learning from anywhere.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Introductory remarks

The findings underline the urgent need for targeted interventions to address infrastructural, technological, and human resource challenges in HDI libraries. By adopting a holistic and context-sensitive approach, these libraries can become transformative spaces that contribute meaningfully to student success, academic excellence, and community upliftment. The literature reviewed revealed several important findings regarding the transformation of university libraries into dynamic learning spaces, within the South African HDIs context. These findings highlight the evolving role of libraries, the integration of digital technologies, the need for inclusivity, and the importance of collaboration.

¹⁸ Stephen Downes, "Newer Theories for Digital Learning Spaces," in *Handbook of Open, Distance and Digital Education* (Springer, 2023), 129–46.

¹⁹ Anne Hartree, "Malcolm Knowles' Theory of Andragogy: A Critique," *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 3, no. 3 (April 9, 1984): 203–10, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0260137840030304>.

Evolving Role of University Libraries

Libraries are no longer places for storing and accessing books and academic materials only. Dempsey emphasised that libraries have transitioned into active learning environments that promote a range of activities beyond quiet study, such as group discussions, media production, and digital learning.²⁰ This shift is not just a global phenomenon but is particularly relevant in South Africa, where libraries must support a diverse student population with varying needs. South African universities, many of which serve historically disadvantaged populations, with leverage libraries as inclusive learning environments that support a wide array of academic and personal development activities.²¹

It transpired that the persistent inequalities in HDI libraries reflect systemic underfunding and historical marginalisation.²² HDI's libraries still struggle with resource disparities that date back to apartheid-era policies, which prioritised white institutions over others.

Impact of Digital Technologies

The adoption of digital technologies is one of the most significant changes affecting university libraries worldwide. In South Africa, where many students face socio-economic challenges, digital resources and mobile platforms are key to ensuring access to academic materials.²³ Libraries can now extend their services beyond physical spaces by offering e-books, online journals, and digital resource platforms accessible through smartphones and laptops. However, this increased reliance on digital technologies also poses challenges due to the digital divide that persists in South Africa.²⁴ While some students have access to high-speed internet and modern devices, others do not, which requires libraries to offer physical resources such as computers and reliable internet within their facilities.

Inclusivity in Library Spaces

Inclusivity is a central theme in transforming university libraries, particularly in South Africa, where educational inequity remains a major concern.²⁵ The literature reveals that libraries must serve as accessible spaces for all students, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, students with disabilities, and others who may face barriers to education. To achieve this, libraries must offer a variety of resources, such as assistive technologies for students with disabilities and services such as tutoring and academic advising that promote equity.²⁶ Inclusive library environments contribute to student success by fostering a sense of belonging and ensuring that all students can excel regardless of their background.

Collaborative Learning Spaces

The literature consistently highlights the importance of collaboration in modern learning environments.²⁷ Libraries have increasingly become spaces for group work and peer collaboration, reflecting a broader educational shift toward collaborative learning models. In South Africa, where students often come from diverse educational and socio-economic backgrounds, collaborative spaces in libraries allow students to share knowledge, learn from one another, and bridge gaps in understanding. These spaces also prepare students for the collaborative nature of the modern workplace, where teamwork and communication are

²⁰ Dempsey, *The Network Reshapes the Library: Lorcan Dempsey on Libraries, Services and Networks*.

²¹ Nomihla W Ndlela, Katleho Moloi, and Musasa Kabeya, "Improvement in the Development of the Internet of Things (IoT)," in *2024 International Conference on Electrical, Computer and Energy Technologies (ICECET)* (IEEE, 2024), 1–6.

²² Mathew Moyo and Ezra Ondari Okemwa, "Students' Perceptions of Information Literacy at Two South African Universities," 2022.

²³ Smith, "Key Issues in Education and Social Justice."

²⁴ Mhlengi Ngcobo, "An Investigation of the Inclusion of Decoloniality in the Objectives of the National Library of South Africa's (NLSA) Digitisation Programme," 2024.

²⁵ Martin N Ndlela, *Organizational Communication in the Digital Era: Examining the Impact of AI, Chatbots, and Covid-19* (Springer Nature, 2024).

²⁶ Morakinyo Akintolu and Moeketsi Letseka, "Investigating the Awareness, Use and Challenges of Open Educational Resources: A Survey of an Open Distance e-Learning-Based Institution in South Africa," *OPEN EDUCATION RESOURCES* 81 (2023).

²⁷ Jacqui Moore, Ian Elliott, and Hannah Hesselgreaves, "Collaborative Leadership in Integrated Care Systems; Creating Leadership for the Common Good," *Journal of Change Management* 23 (September 24, 2023): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14697017.2023.2261126>.

essential skills.²⁸ The introduction of maker spaces and technology labs in libraries can further enhance collaboration by allowing students to work together on creative projects and digital media production.²⁹

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the literature review, several recommendations emerge for transforming South African university libraries into dynamic learning spaces that are inclusive, technology-driven, and collaborative.

Invest in Digital Infrastructure

To address the challenges of the digital divide, South African university libraries must invest in digital infrastructure that supports both online and physical access to resources. Libraries should provide high-speed internet, a wide range of digital tools, and computers for students who lack access to technology at home. Additionally, libraries should continue to expand their mobile-friendly platforms, ensuring that students can access resources remotely through smartphones and other devices.

Promote Inclusivity through Design and Services

Libraries must be designed with inclusivity at their core. This includes providing accessible spaces to students with disabilities and offering support services such as academic advising, tutoring, and career counselling. Libraries should also foster a welcoming environment where students from diverse backgrounds feel a sense of belonging. Initiatives, such as peer mentoring programs, study groups, and cultural awareness events, can help build inclusive communities within the library space.

Create Flexible and Collaborative Learning Spaces

Libraries should incorporate flexible spaces that support individual study and group work. Modular furniture and open spaces that can be easily reconfigured will allow students to adapt the environment to their specific learning needs. Group study rooms equipped with technology that supports collaboration such as smart boards, video conferencing tools, and media production equipment will further enhance the role of libraries as collaborative learning spaces.

Establish Maker Spaces and Innovation Labs

Introducing maker spaces and innovation labs can transform libraries into creative hubs where students can engage in hands-on learning and digital production.³⁰ These spaces should be equipped with 3D printers, multimedia production equipment, and software that supports coding, design, and other digital skills. Maker spaces provide opportunities for students to experiment, collaborate, and learn through doing, which complements traditional academic learning.

Incorporate Cultural Sensitivity and Ubuntu in Library Services

The concept of ubuntu, which emphasises shared humanity and community, can inform the transformation of South African libraries into spaces that promote collaboration and collective learning. Libraries should incorporate cultural sensitivity into their services, recognizing the diverse backgrounds of students and offering programming that reflects the values and traditions of South African communities. This may include hosting community events, offering language support services, and creating spaces for cultural exchange and dialogue.

²⁸ Masilela, "Cultural Tourism in South Africa: A Case Study of the Experiences of Employees."

²⁹ Jean Ryoo et al., "Take Space, Make Space: How Students Use Computer Science to Disrupt and Resist Marginalization in Schools," *Computer Science Education* 30 (March 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1080/08993408.2020.1805284>.

³⁰ Siviwe Bangani and Luyanda Dube, "South African Academic Libraries as Contributors to Social Justice and Ubuntu through Community Engagement," *IFLA Journal* 49, no. 3 (October 27, 2023): 541–53, <https://doi.org/10.1177/03400352231166751>.

Strengthen Library Staff Training

Library staff should be trained not only in digital tools and resources but also in creating inclusive and supportive learning environments.³¹ Continuous professional development in digital literacy, customer service, and cultural competence will empower library staff to assist students effectively and contribute to the library's role as a dynamic learning space.

CONCLUSION

The transformation of South African university libraries into dynamic learning spaces is both a necessity and an opportunity. By integrating digital technologies, promoting inclusivity, and fostering collaboration, libraries can become central to student success and social equity in higher education. However, achieving this transformation will require significant investment in infrastructure, training, and support services, particularly in historically disadvantaged institutions. As South African universities continue to evolve, libraries must be at the forefront of this change, reimagining their role to meet the needs of a diverse and dynamic student population.

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³¹ Chigona, Agnes, and Nyarai Tunjera. "Teacher educators' need for support for effective technology integration into pedagogy." In *Innovate Learning Summit*, pp. 439-449. Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE), 2020.

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