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**Measures to improve information services provision in selected Public  
University libraries in Western Kenya.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Public university libraries globally in this dynamic and innovative environment strives to satisfy their users' needs. From time immemorial they have been essential constituents of scholastic enterprise and have been established alongside academic institutions. Empirical literature on library service standards assessments and user's satisfaction is extensive but controversial. The digital age is also changing the methods of producing and disseminating information with a greater emphasis on electronic service delivery. To retain relevance, libraries are expected to adapt to new technologies and position themselves as important learning organizations where services continually change and improve to meet the information demand of all the user community. Most studies in Kenya relating to academic libraries service quality enhancement and awareness is scanty and library service goals and objectives are not in tandem with its stakeholders. Consequently there is need to provide scientific knowledge and suggestive solutions on library information services. The purpose of this study is therefore to assess the predictive variables of library performance in public university libraries of Western Kenya and suggestive measures to improve library information service to the user community. The specific objective of the study includes; assessing compliance of public university libraries in Western Kenya to statutory standards for information services provision; to assess the user satisfaction in relation to information service provision of public university libraries in Western Kenya and to identify the challenges to service provision of information services. The study adopted gap analysis model. Quantitative and qualitative research design was used with a sample size of 507 respondents. Data was collected through questionnaire, interview, observation and document review. The results was presented by the use of percentages, graphs and frequency tables. The findings indicated that library information services for the normal and persons with disabilities users were below normal satisfaction level, inadequacy in funds for physical expansion, service personnel, low competency in service personnel, weak management policies.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Library Information services pertains to those services through which librarians directly supply users with information but also interfaces created by librarians and adjusted to users through which they could independently find needed information (Stojanovski and Papic, 2012). There is a high positive correlation between quality of information sources and library service. Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry, (1990) argues that key to delivering high quality service is to continually monitor customers perception of the service quality, identify causes of service quality shortfalls and take appropriate action to improve the quality of the service. ISO 11620, (1998), posits performance predictors for library's quality as the totality features and characteristics of products or services that bears on the library's ability to certify stated or implied needs. This has created a gap in the library information services of universities of Western Kenya of which has been bench-marked below the user satisfaction level. Therefore the purpose of gathering library service quality data is to identify what is working well and what is not and to increase knowledge of customers' requirement (Phipps, 2004). Otember, (2012) argued that academic libraries are responsible for the policy on customer/user service provision by ensuring that library provides a service that is customer friendly to meet the customer's needs, provides services all the time within the reach of available resources, offer comfortably, welcoming and clean environment where users can work from, ensure information materials and resources appropriate to the needs users, develop through training library staffs to able. Hansen (1998), introduces the term barrier-free as an inclusive environment and one which all users, whatever their inabilities, are able to carry out their activities comfortably, effectively and safely without being restricted by poor design, maintenance or management of the built environment. Itegi (2015) witnessed a tremendous growth of Kenyan universities, calling for library service

quality enhancement in all institution of higher learning in area of authority and management structures, assessing the values of service provided and availability of services to the user community. He was silent on budget, personnel, facilities and equipment. My study included all of these predictive variables as a measure of performance of public university libraries of Western Kenya.

The standards for libraries in higher education are design to guide university libraries in advancing and sustaining their roles as partners in educating students, achieving their institutions missions, and positioning libraries as leaders in assessment and continuous improvement on their university. ACRL, (2018), posits an outcome-based framework determining the institution effectiveness. Stalford (2014) posits a standard which is reprographic. IFLA (2015) postulate a standard which reflect a current consensus on roles, principles, guidelines, best practices or models for a particular activity or service. CUE (2014) supported a standard which encompasses all academic programs, varied, authoritative and up to date information resources, which facilitates teaching, learning and research and community service reviewed within a period not exceeding five years. It is more silent on library departmental policy in relations to policies of it stakeholders who are the parent institution, the local government and the national government (corporate) policies. Universities of Western Kenya have experienced different time-lags in the achievement of their parent institution missions, goals and objectives.

User satisfaction in university libraries has been the primary objectives of both the libraries and librarians. Musoke, Kakai and Akiten (2005) identify students, staff and researchers as university library users with a growing numbers of university students, increase of study programs coupled with paradigm shifts, increase in research and rapid ICT development and have all change the routines of traditional academic librarianship. These changes and demands, therefore, need an

innovative librarian, who by using various initiating networks and collaboration, would try to meet the never-ending needs of university library users'. Therefore, the quality of information service rendered should be standards that meet the users' needs and expectations. Blar and Malik, (2017), asserts that it is through the users which librarians can determine if the library information services rendered to users are satisfactory or not. There has been a challenge in the provision of library information services and awareness in the performance of public university libraries of Western Kenya. Therefore for libraries and information service to stay viable in the current environment, it is important that the adopt marketing strategies to help meet the library's department goals and objectives of its stakeholders. Kamau, Kiplangat and Odingo (2018) in their study of Kenyatta University, revealed a limited to and use of ICT. Kavulya (2014), asserts that public university libraries in Kenya and particularly western Kenya have inadequate information service, inadequacy in budget, personnel, facilities and equipment. The literatures agree on a variety of techniques to promote library services and resources Nkanga (2002) agrees on personal contacts, circulars, memos, telephone calls, meetings, direct mailing, displays, talks newsletters, library tours and leaflets. Cumming (1994) supported outreach programs, holding lectures, changing library's exhibits library tours, class room instructions, one-on-one appointments, library homepage, online catalogue and one-on-one training. Dodsworth (1998) supports the marketing approach of mailouts, personal visits, presentation newsletters, extension activities and cultivating the press and media. Hindchcliffe and Leon, 2011; Moulaison and Corrado, 2011; Yi, 2018, to keep pace with evolving information technology, librarians use blogs, wikis and podcasting, YouTube and Flickr and Facebook. This was supported by Maria G.N. Musoke (2004) in his strategies for addressing the university library user's changing needs and practices in Sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, my study identified areas of weaknesses and

suggestion measures to improve library information services in public universities of Western Kenya.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Library service standards and user satisfaction have been the primary objectives of both the libraries and librarians globally. The growing number of university students, the increase of study programs coupled with paradigm shifts, the increase in research and the rapid ICT development have all change the routines of traditional academic librarianship. This has brought a challenge and an awareness problem to all public university libraries of Western Kenya which are characterized by inadequacy in information service, less allocated budget, less facilities, low equipment and low technological progress according to literature. The current literature is therefore full of information on academic libraries information service provision and awareness in public university libraries in Kenya. Consequently there is need to provide scientific knowledge and suggestive solutions on library information services. The purpose of this study is therefore to assess the predictive variables of library performance in public university libraries of Western Kenya and suggestive measures to improve library information service to the user community.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. To assess if the academic libraries of public university of Western Kenya meet the accreditation by external bodies (Cue).
2. To propose measures for strengthening provision of information services in public University Libraries in Western Kenya..

## **METHODOLOGY**

Quantitative and qualitative descriptive research design was used. It was conducted in 4 public university libraries of western Kenya. The study population comprise of all academic staff, trained librarians, top management and categories of students where the data was collected by questionnaires, interviews, observations and document analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Ranking of Library space, facilities and equipment

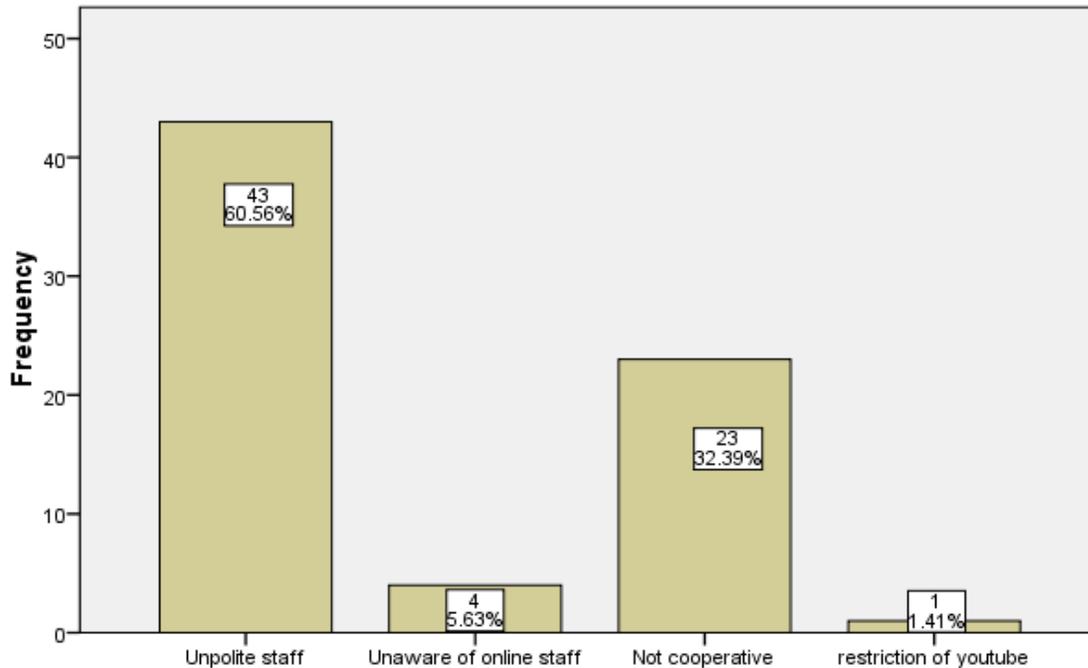
**Table 1**

Response	N Statistic	Range Statistic	Minimum Statistic	Maximum Statistic	Mean Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic	Variance Statistic
Ambiance and conducive to learning	340	4	1	5	3.95	.912	.832
Convenient for users with special needs	339	4	1	5	3.48	1.124	1.262
Sufficient doorways for exit in case of emergency	340	4	1	5	3.51	1.213	1.472
Ease of movement of users, staff and library resources	341	4	1	5	4.01	1.036	1.073
Library impression	337	4	1	5	3.90	.914	.835
Computer and electronic equipment are accessible in Library	341	4	1	5	3.73	2.980	8.880
Spaced corridors	339	4	1	5	3.62	1.057	1.117
Entrance and exit points for good security	336	4	1	5	3.64	1.248	1.556
Location in central place	332	4	1	5	3.94	1.021	1.042

As indicated in table 1. All the library buildings from all university libraries despite not being purpose built, were conducive for learning, the entrances were conspicuously and centrally placed. There was ease of movement for users and computer and electronic equipment were accessible. However at the Maseno library, the entrance area was under repair. At MMUST library, there was a lift being put in place to provide ease of movement for users with special needs whereas at KSU library there is a ramp. All the libraries had elaborate entrances and exit points with reliable and working electronic security gates. This concurs with Tiemensma (2009)

study who asserts that in the digital environment, the University Library also moves from physical collections to connection.

**Figure 1 Service Personnel**



60.5 percent of the respondents felt that staffs were impolite, while 32.39 percent indicated that staffs are not co-operative and 5.63 percent said that staffs are unaware of the online system. 3.3 percent of the respondents cited poor customer services. It concurs with Rehman (2013) study on libraries in Pakistan which found similar challenges on the inability of the libraries under study to adequately meet the needs of the users.

**Table 2 Promotion Awareness of library services**

	Yes	No
Reference and information services	96.4%	4.0%
Information services	96.8%	4.7%
Circulation services	64.2%	45.1%
Interlibrary services	61.3%	50.5%
Information literacy services	69.9%	38.6%
Reprographic services	47.7%	64.3%
Multimedia services	64.2%	46.6%
Knowledge management system	71.3%	35.4%
Preservation services	69.9%	35.4%
Archiving services	77.1%	30.7%
E-Resources	90.0%	15.5%
Computer and ICT services	91.0%	15.5%
Reserve services	76.0%	32.5%
Borrowing and lending services	96.1%	4.0%
Current awareness services	83.5%	22.0%
Selective dissemination of information	64.9%	42.2%
Self services	79.9%	24.2%
Institutional repository services	74.9%	28.9%

As shown in table 2, in an attempt to establish the awareness on the availability of library services, results indicate that majority of respondents at 96.8 percent said yes they were aware of the information services provided in the university libraries. While 4.7 percent said they were not aware of the information services available. A look at the results, 64.3 percent of the respondents indicated that they were not aware of reprographic services compared to 47.7 percent who said they were aware. Overall the findings present a picture of respondents who were aware of the library services provided. This is evident from the responses ranging between

61.3 to 96.8 percent who said yes they were aware. For respondents who indicated no they were not aware, results show a trend, ranging between 4.0 to 47.7 percent. The implication here shows that in all the university libraries in the western region of Kenya both students and lecturers were aware of majority of the library services. More analyses was conducted to ascertain the library services used. Such awareness of library services are in line with Ramakrishina ,Sasikal & Gowridevi (2016), who revealed that reference, digital library, circulation, photocopying services were the most important utilized services. These services were also considered as effective Services. Majority of users were satisfied with the library and information services. Responses given clearly shows the standards on the services offered at the libraries. According to The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL, 2018) Standards for Libraries in Higher Education are designed to guide university libraries in advancing and sustaining their role as partners in educating students, achieving their institutions' missions, and positioning libraries as leaders in assessment and continuous improvement of their university. Findings from the interview sessions indicated that all the libraries in the western region marketed their library services. Some of the marketing strategies include; brochures, orientation, book display, notice boards, during university exhibitions and ASK shows. The following excerpts were noted from a few respondents;

Respondent MSN, “we market the library through students- we liaise with the student leaders forum to receive issues from students via director academic, library Facebook page” Respondent MMUST 1, “Through the user literacy classes mostly offered in virtual libraries, our users know other services and online classes.” Respondent JOOST 3; “we also reach out to our users through the social media, inter school marketing, and ASK shows” Respondent KSU 1: Our library

regularly conducts literacy classes across the University. This has helped us reach out to the users and identify what they specifically need”

**Table 3 Information services used**

<b>Service</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Computer and ICT Services	64	21.3
Research services	52	17.3
Borrowing and lending services	77	25.7
Reference and information services	60	20.0
Information resources	11	3.7
Reserve services	5	1.7
E Resources	21	7.0
Institutional Repository Services	10	3.3

As indicated in table 3, 25.7 percent of the respondents said that the service they used was the borrowing and lending services while 21.3 percent indicated they used the computer and ICT services, 20 percent used references and information services, 17.3 percent indicated they used the research, services, 7 percent used e-recourses while 10 percent used the institutional repository. Only 1.5 percent used the reserve services. Such results indicate that while majority of respondents (in table 3) were well aware of what library services were available, most respondents as seen in table 4.8 did not use them. Such results suggest that the libraries through orientation created awareness on the available services to the respondents and failed to monitor their usage. Such findings are at per with the study by Vichea et al., (2017) which showed that

the majority of library users were students and obtained their needed information from the library, especially textbooks and the internet. The findings suggests university libraries should conduct user satisfaction or monitoring and evaluation studies carried out in the last 5-10 years, even to a small extent. This implies that the type of library services provided appear to influence how users perceive the value of the library and institution at large. Upon enquiry from library staff on the services provided to users, it was revealed that services ranging from circulation( lending and receiving) reference, current awareness, acquisition, orientation, e-resources, institutional repository, bindery, photocopying( reprographic services and user education were provided by all the university libraries in the western region of Kenya. Further enquiry revealed unique services from respective university libraries as shown in the following excerpts;

Respondent MSN 1: “the library also provides SDI services where we filter information on current services and channel to students via email, We also organize seminars and conferences.”

Respondent MSN 2: “we provide referral (to other sources) and assist students access e-resources, guide students on how to exploit resources available in library”

Respondent MMUST 1: “We also provide junior services at the public reader’s services”

Respondent MMUST 2: “we provide children services and virtual services though not many students are aware”

It was also revealed that the JOOST University Library provided services to users with special needs. This was noted by respondent JOOST 3 who said that the library had installed a special software to provide services for users with visual impairment. Although the respondent could not remember the name of the software by the time of the interview, it was evident that a few library staff were also partially trained on how to use the software.

## **Suggestions**

1. Improvement of librarian competency to meet the needs of the user community
2. Improvement of information literacy in the form of user education.
3. Enhancement of local content creation.
4. Improvement of electronic resources and library systems
5. Library promotional strategies.

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