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## Assessment of Information Services' Provision in University Libraries in accordance with The Commission of University Education (CUE) Guidelines: Selected University Libraries in Western Kenya

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# **Assessment of Information Services' Provision in University Libraries in accordance with The Commission of University Education (CUE) Guidelines: A Case of Selected Public University Libraries in Western Kenya**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to provide an assessment of information services provision in accordance with the CUE guidelines, examining the challenges faced in providing information services and identifying suggestions for service improvement. The study was conducted in four public Universities Libraries in the Western region of Kenya. The study targets undergraduate students, lecturers and library staff. Descriptive survey research design is adopted in the study. Generalisability of the results of this study is a major limitation since the research does not target all public university libraries in Kenya. Data was collected through structured questionnaires, interviews, document analysis and observation. Data from the questionnaires was quantitatively analysed and the qualitative data from the interviews was transcribed and themes organised and presented based on the responses. Public university libraries in Kenya are characterized with inadequacy in information services, allocated budget, facilities, equipment and personnel. Respondents urged that there is inadequate funding and their library budgets had not met the threshold of 10% of the institution's operational budget as stipulated by Commission for University Education(CUE) standards, lack enough reference books (31.1 percent), inadequate library space(24.9 percent), slow internet connection(23.0 percent), lack of Computers (12 percent) poor customer service (3.3 percent) and unfriendly staff (2.5 percent). The study recommended for additional budget to add on to acquisition of information resources, recruit staff and provide sustainable services. In conclusion, beside adhering to the CUE standards and guidelines in the provision of information services, the libraries are proactive in providing user centered services.

**Key words:** Commission of University Education, Information Communication Technology (ICT), Information services, Kenya, Libraries, Users.

## **INTRODUCTION**

A University Library is one entity within the university which is involved in the provision of information materials for purposes of meeting the teaching, learning and research obligations of the university (Umoh, 2017). According to Kavulya (2004) libraries in universities are established as instruments for guiding students in ideal ways of investigation and research. To achieve this role, first and foremost, the university libraries acquire information resources in order to support courses in the curriculum as well as ongoing projects of the faculties. Secondly the resources are organised in a manner that allows easy access and retrieval. Thirdly the libraries ensure that the users are equipped with the necessary information literacy skills to assist them in locating and retrieving the information that they require. In essence, the vast collection of organised information resources found in university libraries provide diverse, concepts and viewpoints to students and researchers. The knowledge acquired from the information materials thereafter contributes to the intellectual advancement of the students and society at large.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

University libraries in Kenya, are guided by the Commission of University Education (CUE) Standards and Guidelines for information service provision. The objectives of the framework include; provision of up-to-date information resources for all academic programs, the adoption and maintenance of Information Communication Technologies (ICT), organization of library materials for efficient access and retrieval, use of internationally recognized library conventions and standards, establishing, promoting and sustaining quality library services that facilitate teaching, learning and research. Although the standards and guidelines have been put in place and enforced in all the universities libraries in Kenya, over the years, it has been reported that the university libraries and their information services are inadequate. Regardless of these glaring challenges of inadequacy, the University libraries are still expected to adhere to the standards and guidelines. Awareness has it that the quality of information service provision as an expected yardstick in the university libraries in Western Kenya has never been measured or questioned. Such insights imply that if such trends continue unchecked, then the quality of information services provision will be jeopardized. As a point of remedy to this situation, it is important for the public university libraries in Western Kenya to put in place workable policies that serve as the driving force towards quality service provision. Assessing the status of the libraries in adherence to the laid down

CUE standards and having implementable policies could change the equation towards quality service provision. This is the foremost emphasis of this study.

This study focused on four public University Libraries in western Kenya (Maseno University Library, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Jaramogi Odiga Ogiga University Library, and Kisii University Library) to find out the extent to which they comply to the Commission of University Education (CUE) standards and guidelines.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the study were to:

- i) Examine the information services offered by the selected public university libraries in the context of quality service provision in line with CUE recommendations
- ii) Investigate the challenges the selected public university libraries face in their endeavor to adhere to the CUE standards, remedies undertaken or else, best practices adopted and suggestions made to address the challenges.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Standards for measuring quality of information services provision**

The 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 on their university. Library standards articulate expectations for library contributions to institutional effectiveness, and that they are structured to provide a comprehensive framework using an outcomes-based approach, with evidence collected in ways most appropriate for each institution. (The Association of College and Research Libraries ACRL, 2018).

The Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL, 2016) stipulated that the university library should enable the strategic research priorities of the university by enriching the research lifecycle through appropriate services that are clearly articulated and communicated

to researchers; it should provide access to a sufficient mix, breadth and depth of content and scholarly resources that are fit for purpose and support digital scholarship; its policies, practices and processes should be designed to accommodate stakeholder diversity; it should optimize access to a range of content by ensuring this is discoverable, accessible and unconstrained by place or time. The CAUL also stated that university libraries should describe, manage, store and provide access to the university's teaching and learning resources, such as reading lists, Open Educational Resources (OERs) and examination papers; it should enable all students to have access to library learning programs and activities consistent with the requirements of their course of study, their mode of study and the learning needs; and that the university library staff should be appropriately skilled, responsive and client-centered; they should be accessible to students seeking individual assistance with their studies; the library space should also support the learning outcomes, be accessible and well maintained. The study will try to look at the type of reading materials available for study and how library staffs deliver their services in public university libraries in western Kenya.

IFLA standards are internationally reviewed, published and regularly updated documents. Each IFLA standard reflects current consensus on rules, principles, guidelines, best practice or models for a particular activity or service. IFLA standards in their diversity of styles and subject matter provide optimum benefit for the international library community. Academic libraries are guided in their information service provision services. (IFLA 2015)

The guidelines for the Commission for University Education (CUE, 2014) in Kenya, stipulates that a University library shall provide for all academic programmes; varied, authoritative and up-to-date information resources, which facilitate teaching, learning, and research and community service. Specifically, a library shall ensure that the information resources are relevant, adequate in quality and quantity; that the university library should

develop and implement a collection development policy which shall be reviewed within a period not exceeding five years; that the library subscribes, facilitates access and availability of electronic information resources; that it establishes and sustains institutional repositories, that it installs library systems that support data exchange using standard protocols and formats; and that, the library should ensure it has an Advisory Committee which shall be responsible for collection development. This study looks at the standards guiding the provision of information services stipulated by the CUE and see whether the Western Kenya Public University libraries measure up to these standards.

### **Information services offered in public university Libraries**

The information (or digital) age is 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 organisations where services continually change and improve to meet the information demands of the community. Importantly, university libraries are well placed to exploit information technology and interact with their communities and users in meaningful ways to retain relevance into the future. Ijiekhuamhen et al (2015) found out that, the largest proportion of the respondents go to the university library for internet connectivity. The study will try to find out the availability of internet connectivity in the public university libraries in western Kenya.

### **Collection development**

Collection development is the process of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of a library's materials collection in terms of patron needs, community resources, and attempting to correct existing weaknesses if any (Evans and Saponaro 2012). Adewole et al. (2015) reputed that there were inadequacies resources which emanated from poor acquisitions, although library resources provided were easily accessible and fairly adequate to meet the

information needs of the users. The study assesses if university libraries in western Kenya have collection development policies which guide them in the acquisition process.

### **Staffing**

Namaganda and Sekikome (2013) study showed that computer hardware and software, technical support and training were all identified as significant technological needs. They identified a wide gap in the staffing levels within the library, therefore, there is need to recruit more staff. The study will try to know the total number of staff and there level of qualification in the public university libraries in Western Kenya.

### **ICT Services**

Quick and easy access to information is importance in academic Libraries and ICTs facilitates this through information processing, storage communication retrieval and dissemination of automated information Ramasodi (2009) found out that the majority of library users had prior knowledge in the use of computer, that majority of respondents had used the Internet. This study will scrutinize on the bandwidth size and internet usage on service provision in public university libraries in Western Kenya.

Kennedy (2008), observed that the delivery of electronic resources has transitioned from physical formats and to the current format of delivery via the Internet. The study will try to explore on the type of electronic -resources available in the public university libraries in Western Kenya.

### **Library resources available to users with special needs**

Bashir, et al (2017) quantitatively analyzed library resources available to persons with special needs in both public and private universities of Lahore, India. The study revealed that the following were available; ramps and elevators, directional signs in large print, book call

numbers converted into Braille for blind students but telecommunication devices had not been provided for the deaf students. This study will observe if students with special needs are catered for in information service provision in public university libraries in Western Kenya.

### **Library services**

Tiemo and Atebon (2016) found out that users were satisfied with the lending services of library, renewal of library materials and longer hours of internet services in the library. Majority of the students sometimes use the library to read for examination and to up-date knowledge; students consult Online Public Access Catalogue to locate library resources (Solarin, 2014). Du and Evans (2011) revealed that library online databases, reference, interlibrary loans and document delivery were the services most familiar to, and utilized by academic users. Okeke, Oghenetga and Nwabu (2013) argued that reference materials are information materials in the library, regardless of their formats, whether in print or electronic formats that can be used to provide relevant answers to divergent information needs of the library users. The study tries to find out the type of services offered in public universities libraries in Western Kenya. Olarongbe, et al. (2013) showed that the majority of library users were students and obtained their needed information from the library, especially textbooks and the internet. The study tries to find out the availability of various printed reading material and the internet bandwidth in the public university libraries in western Kenya.

### **Challenges of information service provision in University libraries**

#### **Library staff**

In order for the library to stay up-to-date on current trends and technology, the staff must create new approaches when hiring new personnel and retraining of library staff. Gwang (2011) observed that without the availability of the requisite staff, it is impossible to achieve

a functional provision of library and information services. The study tries to look at the qualifications of library staff of public University libraries in western Kenya.

### **Lack of Network services**

The Internet can be defined as a networking technology that connects millions of devices globally enabling fast and convenient transfer of information; it carries information resources and services such as hypertext documents and the World Wide Web (Gunapala, 2017; Beal, 2017). Emmanuel and Sife (2008) noted that accessibility of e-resources is only possible if ICT equipment such as computers, servers, video machines and overhead projectors together with the necessary telecommunications support and requirements for Internet connections are at hand. Yet most libraries lacked network services. The study looks at the availability of ICT infrastructure of the public university libraries in Western Kenya.

### **Inadequate Funding**

Okeke et al. (2013) observed that most libraries are stocked with obsolete materials and therefore recommended that more money should be made available so as to purchase new reading materials. This study tries to look at the budget allocation and how it is utilized in the university libraries in western Kenya.

### **Need for written collection development policies**

According to Ekere, Igwe & Omweku (2017) the provision of access to information in libraries through collection development, resource sharing and acquiring remote access to electronic resources through ICT facilities and requires libraries have to adapt their collection development policies to accommodate electronic resources. The main concern here is the need to recruit knowledgeable ICT staff to guide users in utilization of the electronic databases. In this regard, the study investigates whether library users in public university libraries in Western Kenya have adequate resources for sharing in ICT based platforms.

### **Suggestions on improving information services provision in University libraries.**

Okeke et al. (2013) study identifies the following as some of the remedies of reducing the challenges in libraries. First, the management should vote reasonable amount of money to enable the library acquire up-date reference and information services. Secondly, the staff of institutions libraries should carry out training and retraining of staff to meet required 21st century demand. Thirdly, attitude of students can be changed through user education programmes, conference, workshop on the use of reference materials and other resources in the institution. Fourthly, virtual library should be provided to help students source for information anywhere in the world. As a result, this study intends to establish whether these could also be issues that the public university Libraries should also think about.

Cheputula (2017) recommended that, in order to provide efficient library information service, they should develop good infrastructure and also develop librarians' skills. The study tries to look at the infrastructure and librarians technical skills in the public university libraries in Western Kenya. Msuya and Maro (2016) held that universities should stock adequate study materials that are relevant to the curriculum, and that the government should provide enough funding to the universities in order for university universities to excel in provision of information services in Tanzania. This study seeks to know whether the same frameworks can work on public university libraries in Western Kenya.

According to Gunapala, M. A. (2017) the Australian university libraries revealed the complexities of leadership, change and new technologies led to more redefined services in reference, digital library, circulation, photocopying services. The study looks at the dynamism of the effectiveness of information services in the public university libraries in western Kenya.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Due to financial constraints and time limitations the researcher was not able to study all the University Libraries in Kenya. The study focused on the four public Universities Libraries in Western Kenya; namely; Maseno, University, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST), Jaramogi Odiga Ogiga University of Science and technology (JOOUST) and Kisii University. Descriptive survey research design was adopted in the study. The study targeted a sample size of 470 respondents comprising of 340 students (undergraduate and postgraduate), 92 lectures, 68 library staff and 10 library top management. Simple random sampling was used to select the students and lecturers respondents from each of the universities and ensured that the faculties were well represented. The library staff were purposively selected to participate in the interview sessions. The staff was selected with the view that they are experienced and more likely to provide useful information for the study. A structured questionnaire, interview session, document analysis were techniques used to collect statistical information on the type of library services offered, information resources available, facilities, number of library staff, challenges encountered as well as recommended strategies for improvement. Collected data was analysed quantitatively and qualitatively.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### *Response rate from the instruments of data collection*

Data collected from the questionnaires was systematically analyzed. Out of the 470 questionnaires administered, 342 were successfully filled and returned giving a response rate of 73 percent. Meanwhile, data collected from the interview sessions with library staff and top management were transcribed and thematically presented. Various documents from respective university libraries were examined and findings reported. From observation the study obtained relevant data related to the library infrastructure, seating and reading facilities, shelf arrangements in the four university libraries. The findings are also presented in this section. Table 1 shows the students and lecturers biodata.

Table 1: Students and lecturers biodata

<b>Bio Data</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<i>Status of respondent</i>		
Students	264	77.2
Lecturers	78	22.8
Total	342	100.0
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	229	67.0
Female	113	33.0
Total	342	100.0
<i>University</i>		
Maseno	98	28.7
MMUST	80	23.4
Kisii	95	27.8
JOOST	69	20.2
Total	342	100.0

As earlier mentioned, the Commission of University Education (CUE) is the robust body that has created standards with the main goal of helping university libraries evaluate and measure the performance of services provided. Analysis of data obtained for this study, was based on the fifth schedule of the Standards and Guidelines for University Libraries, abbreviated as; LIBR/STD/00.

### ***Development of Mission, Vision and objectives***

As indicated in Standard LIBR/STD/01, University libraries are expected to clearly state their mission, vision as well as objectives., The standard states that; “A university library shall develop an explicit statement of its vision, mission and objectives that are aligned with those of the university. For an institution to accomplish its goals and objectives, the affiliate department must ensure all their operations are aligned with the mission of the institution.

All the four university libraries examined in this study have uniquely stated elaborate mission statements, vision and objectives. The statements comprised of a philosophical framework in support of the teaching, learning and research activities of the universities, showing why they exist, define the services they provide and the category of audience. For instance, the mission for Masinde Muliro University (MMUST) library endeavours; “to support the quality of teaching, learning, innovation and research missions and provide access to recorded

knowledge through the acquisition, organization, preservation and interpretation of information appropriate to current and future needs of the staff, faculty, students and the immediate community served by the library”. The presence of all of the four libraries statements is also evident in the documents availed and on each of the University’s website. This requirement is understood as a strategic plan to meet the goals of the libraries and that of the parent institution.

***Information resources.***

This provision of information resources is the backbone behind the success of libraries. A look at the guide to information resources in LIBR/STD/02; states that, “A university library shall provide, for all academic programs, varied, authoritative and up-to-date information resources, which facilitate teaching, learning, and research and community service for all categories of its users”. The relevance and progress of a library are still understood in the context of the collection ( Kavulya, 2004).

All the four university libraries examined reported that they select and acquire information materials economically and expeditiously as possible based on the current and future programmes offered at the respective universities. Despite the dwindling fund allocated by the parent institutions, all four libraries reported that with the merger allocated funds they still relied on donations that consequently enabled them achieve the intended goals and objectives. Each of the libraries also reported that they have a Collection Development policy which guides the acquisition of resources and helps understand the trends of the collection in the context of the number of volumes. The policy is reviewed every five years. One major observation is that the Collection Development policies in all the four university libraries are silent about guidelines on the acquisition of electronic resources which ideally should give the ratio of the resources vis a vis the user’s population. The CUE standards does not specify the guidelines to be used for acquiring e-resources for the institutions. Table 2 shows the number of information resources (both print and electronic) acquired in the four university libraries in the last three years (2017 to 2019).

**Table 2: Number of information resources acquired in 2017 to 2019**

Library	2017		2018		2019	
	Donations & Purchase	E-resources	Donations & Purchase	E-resources	Donations & Purchase	E-resources
Maseno	3523	KLISC	24858	KLISC	2120	KLISC
MUUST	5376	KLISC	7413	KLISC	6718	KLISC
JOOST	7,168	KLISC	6119	KLISC	4094	KLISC
Kisii	5118	KLISC	7211	KLISC	8023	KLISC

(\*KLISC(Kenya Libraries and Information Services Consortium \*E-R: Electronic Resources)

As shown in table 2 over the three years (2017- 2019) all the four university libraries acquired print resources as seen from donations and purchases. Maseno university library shows the highest number of collections in 2018 (24588) which, according to the librarian was attributed to a donations of 23,000 books received from the Canada and 905 medical books received from Tom Mboya University college. Drop in the donations and purchases over the years can be attributed to the massive budgetary cuts across all the four universities. All the university libraries also subscribes to e-resources with access to a large variety of journals and eBooks. In Kenya, the CUE provides that all learning institutions shall subscribe to electronic resources in order to reach out to users irrespective of the geographical location. All the four university libraries attested to the fact that it is through the collaborative effort of the Kenya Library and Information Services Consortium (KLISC) that they are able to upscale the provision of the e-resources at a subsidized level. Only JOOST Library was able to give their current subscription of over 60,000 e-journals and 5 million ebooks including those on Open Access (OA). The e-resources in the all the four libraries are accessible through an off campus arrangement.

#### ***Adoption and maintenance of Information and Communication Technology(ICT)***

The guideline on the use of ICT in libraries as provided in LIBR/STD/03, states that, “A University Library shall adopt and maintain Information Communication Technologies in information management and its operations.” All the four libraries had adopted ICT in the main function areas; in circulation, acquisition, cataloguing, in availing bibliographic information in OPAC, virtual services, institutional repository, JAW services to users with special needs. All the libraries had automated their services and though not adequate, had internet connection points for both students and staff. Adoption of the full potential of ICT

facilities in the majority of university libraries in Kenya is generally hampered by inadequate funding, high levels of computer illiteracy among staff who are expected to provide the services and other factors to be discussed later in the study. Table 3 shows the level of ICT adoption in the four University libraries.

**Table 3:Level of ICT adoption in University Libraries in Western Kenya**

Libraries	No. of CD-ROMs	Computers for OPAC	Computers for Staff	Computers for users	LMS* in use	Off-Campus platform	URL webpage
Maseno	2920	5	30	45	Koha	Ezprozy	<a href="http://www.maseno.ac.ke">www.maseno.ac.ke</a>
MUUST	2200	4	26	45	Koha	Ezproxy	<a href="http://www.mmust.ac.ke">www.mmust.ac.ke</a>
JOOST	2000	10	18	70	Koha	EZprozy	<a href="http://www.JOOST.ac.ke">www.JOOST.ac.ke</a>
Kisii	2500	1	22	128	Koha	RemoteXs	<a href="http://www.kisiiuniversity.ac.ke">www.kisiiuniversity.ac.ke</a>

*(LMS\* Library Management System)*

From data given, it is clear that all the four libraries are embracing ICT. Availability of CD-ROMs on diverse subject areas was eminent. Although reported not adequate, computers were allocated for use in service delivery like in the OPAC, staff and users. All the libraries use the Open Source software; KOHA for automating operations and apart from Kisii University who use RemoteXs platform for the off- campus access to e-resources, the other libraries use Ezproxy. All the libraries have well established library websites which are embedded on their respective University websites.

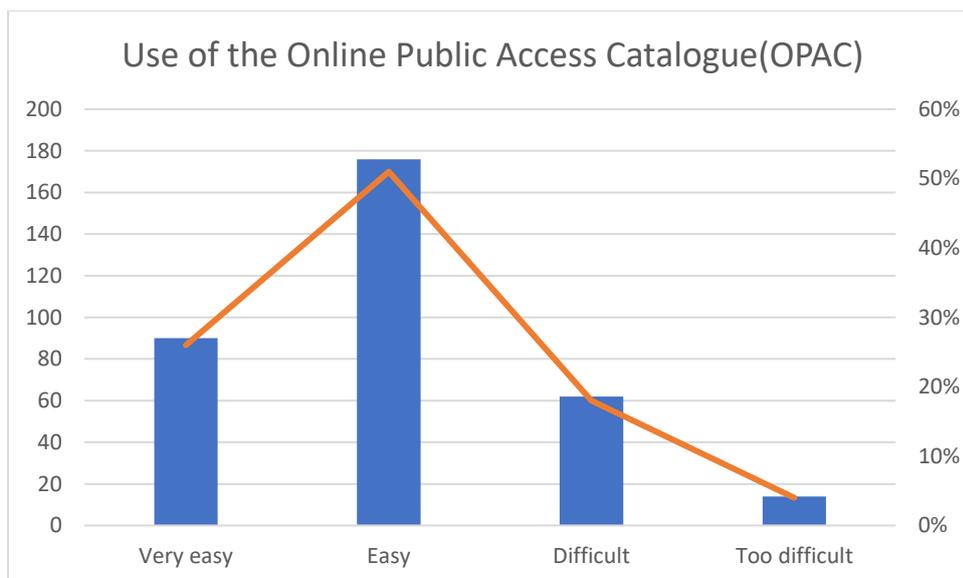
Libraries are also required to have a workable ICT policy. Maseno University Library and MUUST have a written ICT policy which guides the provision and operation of the ICT facilities. At Kisii and JOOST University libraries, the ICT policy was in draft form awaiting Senate approval. The other policy awaiting approval in the four universities was the Institutional Repository policy, although the platform was up and running.

It was also reported that in each of the four University libraries, the ICT facilities are maintained by the ICT departments. Most libraries indicated they have a Systems Librarian in the library establishment while others said they were yet to hire when funds are available. Kisii, MUUST and Maseno University Libraries in particular reported that they designated System Librarians in place who liaise with the ICT department in overseeing the performance of the facilities. JOOST library indicated they were yet to hire a System Librarian but solely relied on the ICT department to maintain the systems.

### ***Organization and Access to Information Resources.***

Ordinarily, University libraries select and acquire information resources both locally and internationally. It is the mandate of the librarians to organize the information resources to enable location, access and retrieval by the users. The guidelines on organization and access to the information as provided in LIBR/STD/04 states that; “The University Library’s information resources shall be organized, for efficient access and retrieval, using internationally recognized conventions and standards”

All the four university libraries examined in this study reported that the acquired materials are organised using the Library of Congress (LC) Classification Scheme. Evidence indicated that with all the University Campus libraries and branches scattered in varied locations other than the Main Campuses, the resources were centrally classified and catalogued at the Main Campuses. All the four libraries reported that they liaise with the faculties and departments in selecting the materials that are needed based on the programs offered. The materials are then distributed to the campuses and branch libraries accordingly. Such centralization ensures consistency and prevents duplication of entries. Bibliographic information is adequately availed in the OPAC both through the intranet and internet by the four libraries for easy retrieval. Respondents in figure 1 indicate the use of the library catalogues.



**Figure 1: Use of the Catalogue to find materials in the library**

A catalogue is an important tool that directs users where to find what the information materials that a library owns, where to locate it and how to access it. Based on the findings, it was evident that majority of users (51 percent ) are sensitized on the use of the OPAC. Only 4 percent indicated that they had difficulties in using the OPAC. A major observation made on the OPAC in all the four libraries was that the update was missing and the content was not comprehensive based on the collection on the ground. This is a major concern in the majority of public University Libraries besides the many incidences of mishelved materials.

### ***Library Services***

The guideline on library services is reflected on; LIBR/STD/05; “A university library shall establish, promote and sustain quality services that will facilitate teaching, learning and research”. The guideline provides that the library a shall establish and implement variety of services.

From the findings all the four universities offered the normal library services ranging from reference and information, circulation, Selection Dissemination of Information (SDI), Current Awareness Services(CAS), multimedia services, information literacy, knowledge management services, institutional Repositories, internet services, user education services, preservation as well as archival services. While all the four universities provided similar library services, the quality and way in which these services are availed differed. The parameters indicating the differences are seen in the quality of services, nature of service,

number and skills of personnel providing the service. This study, however did not look at the intensity of how the services were used. The study revealed that most respondents (25.7 percent ) used the borrowing and lending services. 21.3 percent used the computer and ICT services, while 20.0 percent used the reference and information services. Only 17.3 respondents used research services, e-resources and the Institutional Repository services.

It was also revealed that JOOST university Library provided services to users with special needs. The library has installed a special screen reader the Job Access With Speech (JAWS), a software program that enables the visually impaired users access and use information content on the computer. A few library staff were trained on how to use the software.

With growing need to disseminate information to all, MMUST library reported that it has set up an outreach services purposely to reach out to the marginalized group of user other than the university community. The library creates linkages through which the library can channel book donations to needy groups and institutions. Some beneficiaries are Luanda secondary school, Shinyalu community resource center among others. The library had milestones in benefiting from funding by the Commission for Higher Education (CHE) to carry out a project that focuses on delivering information to the local community by establishing a village FM station. Such kind of service impacted positively towards the development of the village by availing valuable information for their day to day activities. Figure 2 shows additional services that students and lecturers suggested to be introduced in the libraries.

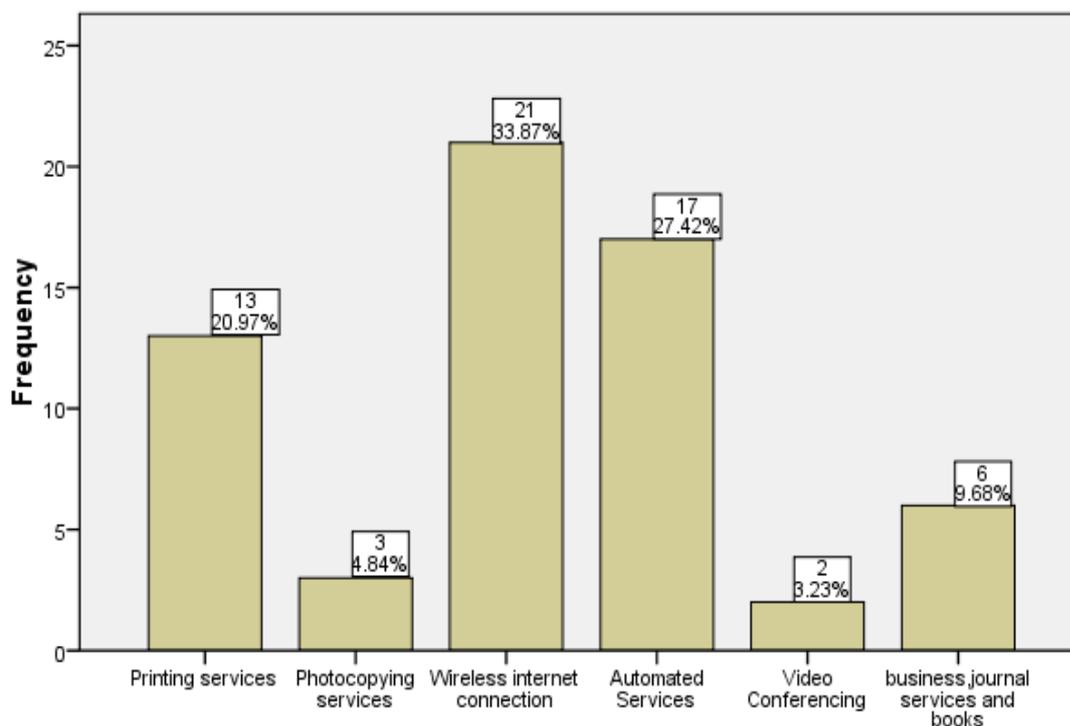


Figure 2: Information services that users suggest to be introduced

The four libraries indicated that they had well written policies guiding the provision of services. For example, elaborate Collection Development policies were in place to guide on the acquisition of resources commensurate to the teaching and research needs of respective faculties. For effective service provision, Maseno University library reported that the operations are guided by work procedures in the acquisition, circulation, librarian's office, / organization of resources, library Reprographics, library systems and virtual library. The four University libraries reported to have various policies as shown in table 4.

**Table 4: Type of policies in respective libraries**

Library	Type of policy
Maseno	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Library policy, Carrel's Policy, Cataloguing policy, Circulation policy</li> </ul>
JOOST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collection Development policy, Filming and photography policy, gifts and donations, weeding policy, Online services policy, ILL* service policy, carrel use policy</li> </ul>
MUUST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CDP*, circulation policy, Carrel use policy, cataloguing policy</li> </ul>
Kisii	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IR* policy, Library policy, weeding policy, acquisition policy, circulation policy, Collection development policy, ICT policy, IL* policy</li> </ul>

*\*(ILL: Interlibrary Loan IL: Information literacy, IR: Institutional Repository, CDP: Collection Development Policy)*

MUUST and JOOST libraries reported that they take feedback from users seriously. This has greatly improved service provision in a more efficient and effective manner. All the four libraries reported that they had put in place complaints and complement registers where users record their feedback on services delivered as well as suggestion boxes. Masinde Muliro University Library indicated that the library regularly conducts user surveys. JOOST library was the only library among the four which indicated that “from time to time we evaluate the user feedback which enable us improve our services” Evaluating user feedback gives the library an opportunity to find out whether the they are doing what they promised to do and if not make amendments. Unique services were provided as well. For example, Maseno University library reported that “the library also offers junior readers available at the public reader services.” Such a service was unique in nature, indicating that besides offering mainstream services and stakeholders they also catered for the needs of other community members.

Availability of internet service was reported in all the four libraries. However, all the libraries indicated that the internet service lacked adequate bandwidth to reach out to the entire University population. Instances of poor connectivity were reported as well as slow moments of downloading documents. Besides the bandwidth issue, all the libraries reported inadequacy of computers which brought about competition among the users. The libraries indicated that they lacked adequate personnel to man the services. Kisii University library for example reported that the library lacked a competent Reference librarian on standby to address the diverse needs of the users as well as one responsible for the indexing and abstracting services. The problem of unawareness of the available library services and how to use them among the users in all the four libraries was uncertain. It was positively reported that all the four libraries provided User Education that comprises of, orientation for the first year students, information literacy and regular training of users. However an Information Literacy curriculum was lacking in all the four libraries which is a major requirement in the CUE standards.

### ***Library facilities***

The guideline on library facilities as provided in LIBR/STD/06, states that; “A University shall provide adequate facility for students, lecturers, staff and other authorized users as a convenient and conducive place for study and research. The guideline provides that the library building and its furnishings shall create an ambience appropriate for scholarship and

an environment conducive enough for learning. The conduciveness of the library building shall allow easy access and delivery of information services and respond to the diverse needs of the users. In general, from observation apart from Kisii and Masinde Muliro University Library with modern library buildings, the rest still operated in the old library buildings. The seating capacity for the libraries is also below the recommended number. For example Maseno has a 600 seating capacity compared to a population of approximately 15,000 students excluding staff. This suggests that most libraries are yet to design and build ultra modern libraries to cater for the growing user population. From observation, all the libraries had elaborate entrances and exit points with reliable and working electronic security gates. From observation, there was ease of movement for users seeking for information services. However, at the Maseno library, the entrance area was under repair and at the JOOST library, there was a lift being put in place to provide ease of movement for users with special needs.

Albeit concerns on the inadequacy of library facilities and equipment available in the four University libraries, majority of the respondents were satisfied with the carrels( 96.8 percent) and tables for accommodating laptops (47.7 percent), the ambience and conducive to learning (64.3 percent), good ventilation and conducive fenestration 61.3 percent), sufficient doorways for exit in case of emergency(60 percent), location in central place( 30.7 percent)

### ***Library Staffing***

The CUE guideline in standard LIBR/STD/07; states that; “A University library shall have appropriate, qualified and adequate staff commensurate with the academic programmes offered, the institutional population, the number of service points, and the hours during which services are offered. This provision expects a designated head of the University library to be appointed by the University Management as one of the Chief Officers of the University. The professionals in the library shall constitute at least 35% of the staff of the library. Library staffing and qualifications according to the CUE librarians shall have academic status and be in the same level and conditions of service as the teaching staff. Of the four university libraries, only MUUST and JOOUST libraries had the highest and recommended qualification for the top management who hold Doctorate qualifications as per the CUE standards and at par with the academic staff. It was reported that the head librarians for Maseno and Kisii were out for training. Data obtained on the various staff levels and numbers per University is shown in table 5.

**Table 5: Number of Staff per University Library and their qualifications**

Library	PhD	Masters	Bachelor	Diploma & Higher National Diploma	Certificate	Support staff & casuals
Maseno	0	3	16	22	7	10
JOOST	2	0	7	4	0	8
MUUST	0	1	9	4	5	1
Kisii	0	5	17	5	0	6

A general observation in all the four University libraries indicated that staffing is inadequate in comparison with the growing population of users. Due to the shortage of staff in the management and operational levels, each university has a system in place that allows staff to pursue further studies. Initially Universities collaborated with the Kenyan government in training staff on subsidized terms. Such arrangements have since ceased due to financial constraints. What is most encouraging on staff development is that staff are willing to learn and embrace new technologies for effective delivery of library services. It was reported that other staff had their own arrangements for training. The immediate supervisors reported that the staff capitalized on applying for their offs to enable them attend classes or professional forums like seminars or workshops.

The need for Universities to re-skill and upskill the work force in the changing times of competitiveness cannot be overemphasized. Retraining staff does not only equip them with the right skills, but enhances their competency towards efficient service provision. None of the four libraries indicated providing funds to train staff.

#### ***Library Administrative Structure.***

This guideline as provided in LIBR/STD/08, states that; “A University library shall have an Administrative structure that is fully integrated with the institutional organizational structure”. The guideline points out that the university library shall be stipulated in the charter of the university and shall ensure a fully-fledged organogram is put in place within the university structure clearly indicating the hierarchy of command. All four libraries had organisational structures in place with the current and proposed establishments.

#### ***Library budget.***

The guideline on the library budget is as provided in LIBR/STD/09 which states that; “the University shall provide at least ten percent (10%) of the total institutional operational budget shall be provided annually for the acquisition of information resources excluding personal

emoluments and capital development. The budget should thus be adequate to acquire print, electronic resources and library facilities and meet the needs of the users. Although it is argued that the majority of public University libraries in Kenya may not have attained the 10% requirement in the budget to enable them upscale their services, libraries have tried to showcase their worth by providing innovative services such as use of the Library Management System in the operations and the subscription to e-resources.

The head librarians from all the four universities pointed out that their library budgets had not met the threshold of 10% of the institution's operational budget as stipulated by CUE standards. The interview with the University Librarian at Maseno university revealed that. "The library budget has been fluctuating due to government / treasury meager capitation allocation. The budget had been downsized and becomes very difficult to know what to prioritize" Such sentiments imply that the library may not be able to effectively render services as would be expected by the users. At JOOST, the Librarian reported that, "we have not achieved the 10% threshold as per CUE requirements." Budget limitations were cited in all the libraries in Western region which meant a major challenge towards implementing ideal library services.

### ***Enhancing library skills through Information Literacy and Competency***

Equipping users with the right skills to locate and access information resources is significant to information professionals. The CUE standard as reflected in LIBR/STD/10 states that; "The University library shall facilitate academic success and encourage lifelong learning through information literacy and competency initiatives" The guideline thus requires that all libraries shall partner with faculty and departments in sensitizing all users on the proper use of the information resources. Libraries are required to establish programs on information literacy competency which must be provided for in the mainstream academic programs of the university.

The study found out that all the four university libraries have established programs that reach out to the users in matters of sensitizing and creating awareness of the variety of resources and services offered. Such programs include; orientation, in-house training, information literacy, workshops and seminars, notices, library, website, use of social media, fliers, library guides.

### *Open, Distance and e- learning library services*

The impact of the internet and WWW on service provision has dramatically changed the provision of information in academic institutions. Since e-learning is mediated by technology libraries have had a paradigm shift and developed online facilities to enable users access information services. CUE standards in LIBR/STD/11, provide that; “ The University shall provide adequate resources to support open, distance and e- learning library services”. Here the libraries are required to put in place the reliable and sustainable framework for supporting distance and e-learning. This is in line with ensuring correct infrastructure in line with the requirements of distance and e-learning. This includes the equipment, links for communication and other access channels to users. All the four university libraries examined, reported that they embrace technology in providing user education and information literacy. For instance Maseno library has a virtual library where users access the electronic information resources, both in campus and off campus.

### **CONCLUSION**

The University libraries are established under the governing structure of the university. Therefore the operations of the libraries should be based within the laid framework of the University’s mission and goals. Each of the libraries examined in the study portrayed uniqueness in service provision, besides being guided by CUE standards. The standards serve as legal frameworks to assess how the libraries are doing in terms of service provision, user needs, support given, and comparison with similar libraries. The study reveals inadequacies ranging from available library facilities and limited budget allocation as hindrances to the performance of the libraries. The fact that the establishment of modern library buildings was still work in progress in all the Universities, current facilities like doorways, reading areas, ICT infrastructure, and facilities for users with special needs among other areas are still wanting. The study recommends that CUE as the regulating legal body for Universities in Kenya should allow the libraries to individually set models for assessing their performance and evaluate services provided, other than being assessed uniformly yet their needs are unique.

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