

**USER NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY AMONG PRIVATE  
UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA: A CASE OF MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY**

***Corresponding Author***

*Tom Nyamache, Principal Mount Kenya University, Nakuru Campus*

*Cell: +254723282500*

*Email: mokweri@gmail.com*

***Others***

*Victoria Munyao, Chief Librarian, Mount Kenya University*

*Cell: +254726380540*

*Phelix Songok, Campus Librarian, Mount Kenya University, Nakuru Campus*

*Cell: +25472285656*

*Ruth Nyambura, Research Scholar, Egerton University*

*Cell: +254715133505*

*Email: runyams@yahoo.com*

*Matoke Nyamboga, Dean, Faculty of Information Science, Kisii University College*

*Cell: +254720593471*

*Email: constantinenyamboga@gmail.com*

***ABSTRACT***

*This paper highlights information needs and expectations of users of select libraries among Private Universities in Kenya. It describes the information sources used, services and facilities preferred and satisfaction of services offered to them. Selected libraries of private Universities in Kenya are surveyed. The study reveals various information sources and services preferred by users. It also highlights their satisfaction level and competency of library staff in assisting users in accessing information resources using information communication Technology (ICT) and its associated tools. This research is limited to few selected libraries of private Universities in Kenya. The paper therefore provides library professionals with a thorough understanding of different types of services and facilities users expect from libraries today. It can help in collection of development policy and planning of services for future use.*

**Key Words:** Academic Library, Information, Users, Expectation, Emerging Challenges, expectations.

## Focus of the Study

Library and Information Centers are playing a vital role by providing the information required by the users for their research and developmental activities. The libraries offer various types of services to the user community and spread the knowledge. The main task is of disseminating the information from the collection as well as made it available from the other institutional resources. The traditional services provided by the libraries like ILL, CAS, SDI, bibliographic listing, reading room, book borrowing were mainly based on the library collection, but due to application of Information Technology the trends in the library and information centers are also shifting towards modernization. The methods and practices used are also changing and the value added services have are emerging as key elements in the new library environment. Globally, libraries are facing the challenges due to the introduction of the IT in the profession and the escalation in the number of publications; whereas the user demands are getting very pinpointed and specific.

The electronic Publishing has further changed the mode of services expected from the traditional libraries. The traditional mode of library services was based on the print media, whereas the present mode lays emphasis on digital information resources, web and Internet resources for providing the services

Users Expects from the Academic Libraries the following aspects; Comprehensiveness, Accessibility, Immediate gratification, Follow ability of data, Ease of use and multiple formats and media

## Literature Review

Academic Libraries have the primary objective acquiring, organizing, which includes preserving, retrieval, dissemination and support to research work among users (*academic scholars*) in higher institutions of learning. However, the way this purpose has been achieved has drastically changed.

Lee (2002) states that, in reflecting on events and trends in the library, on campus and beyond...e-resources have already overtaken print resources in their importance to research library collections, though this is not reflected in dollars spent on collections or in volumes held in this moment and time. The promise of e-resources for research library collection in the future are as boundless as those of the printing press were to scholarship and as important to our ability to support learning, teaching and research as the rural electrification program was to the ability of the farmer to increase the productivity and quality of farm life.

Raitt (2005) points out that the fast-paced technological developments have changed the way the users' access and retrieve information. Information is an important resource, valuable input and power for societal development. It is power as it is the basis of all planning, indeed of all activities. Academic libraries are greatly challenged in satisfying their customer needs since their target market (lecturers, researchers, undergraduate students and postgraduate students) is highly demanding and dynamic in nature. The internet and the World Wide Web (WWW) have made it possible for university teachers' researchers' and students to locate what they need without getting into the library.

Kebede, G. (2002) stipulates that understanding the changing electronic environment of information systems and computers is key in using electronic resources.

Ani (2008) quoting Tsakonas and Papatheodorou (2006), states that "the transition from print to electronic medium apart from resulting in a growth of electronic information, has provided users with new tools and applications for information seeking and retrieval. Electronic resources are invaluable research tools that complement the print-based resources in a traditional library setting.

## Research Methodology

The Area of study focuses on user needs and expectations among private universities in Kenya in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; it covers Mount Kenya University as a case study. This is a desk research study of various reports on library matters among private university libraries in Kenya. The study is descriptive in nature and is suitable in analyzing secondary sources of information and data presentation that has been reached in this presentation. Descriptive statistics have been used in data analysis and presentation which has been dependent on secondary data.

## Library Trends

Academic libraries are changing in response to changes in the learning and research environment and changes in the behavior of library users. The changes are evolutionary.

User needs and expectations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century emanates from the drive to access relevant and accurate information to satisfy the changing information needs in current fields of knowledge.

Library Administrators feel pressured to respond to the dynamic needs and expectations of users, and in some cases, are pressured by university and college administrators to account for their expenditures and demonstrate the outcomes they achieve.

Emergence of Virtual Reference ; Traditional face-to-face reference service with a librarian is being transformed by information technologies deployed to reach an increasingly remote audience, for example, electronic mail, web-based forms, and “chat” or “see you, see me” videoconferencing software. Virtual reference is a situation where users communicate with the Reference Librarian electronically, often on real time, over computers and internet without being physically present. It is yet another situation where the physical presence of the patron is diminishing. The Reference Librarian and patron communicate over e-mail, instant messaging, video conferencing, chatting etc. The increasing disappearance of the patron from Library (*reference requirement used to be*

*one strong reason for the user to come around to the Library)* does hurt the Librarian. However, it's another instance of doing one's daily business in a better way but basically in a different way. Emergence of Informal Learning As in the case of other social sectors like banking or railway booking which facilitates operations by patron from anywhere, anytime, the new expectations about learning is that one should be able to study wherever and whenever he wants to. People want faster approach to information in the context of increasing demand on their time by home, workplace, and social network. Hence there is an emerging demand for informal learning, and the academic library needs to take cognizance of it.

The success of academic libraries depends on their ability to provide Access to Information resources in circulation to better serve the needs of the academic community. The use of video and other social media in information dissemination has increased. This does not require circulation processes but for libraries to adopt web 2.0 technologies which provide an online collaboration, participation, sharing of information and communication services.

The emergence of cloud computing — Result of emergence of the digital environment and connectivity, cloud computing provided a happy situation for all involved, the libraries (economies of scale and bargaining power leading to access to unimaginable number of resources), the user (vast number of resources at the click of the mouse, accessible beyond constraints of time and space) and publishers (increased visibility, and relatively inexpensive operation). Libraries that have remained principally a local unit so far, except for the limited sharing of resources through inter-library loan service, have suddenly become part of a network, confident to meet demand of users for information or document at high speed

Interdisciplinary nature of studies/works - An emerging trend is the interdisciplinary nature of studies/works and cross-campus collaborations aided by emergence of new tools (often free). Such collaborations have become common place paving path for more publications. It is seen now that even first year students tread into research and publication. Users of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in university

libraries study disciplines that require broad knowledge from other subject areas. Libraries therefore require large information resource base to satisfy this user information needs trend which may not be feasible. University libraries therefore, need library cooperation to build sufficient information resources pool for their users' to enable interlibrary user access.

Emerging dominance of e-books which was believed it would not replace print books at any cost. Now, e-books have been conceded more space, by way of apportioning substantial budget *vis-a-vis* print books. Today the trend seems to be reversed as one talks of not going all out for e-books because of the cost of access digital content. It indicates a dramatic swing in their acceptance especially by the student community. However, funding has been forthcoming through local and international partners aided by government tax subsidies on and tax exemptions on computer products.

Another trend in modern academic libraries is that the volume of printing is increasing due to the increased availability of printable full-text e-journals and e-reserves. However most academic libraries have not embraced the printing services and respond to user demand. The result is a frustrated clientele who swam cyber cafes and other bureaus to fulfill their information need. The changes in the technological infrastructure have provided an attractive space suitable for students to pursue academics faster with positive results. However, students are expected to continue to come into the library for quiet study, group study or to socialize with friends. But as computers become more affordable and more and more students purchase their own, how does this affect library use? Students clearly prefer desktop delivery of information and if they have a personal networked computer.

The Horizon Report: 2010 Edition has singled out two technologies to watch in the near future; The Gesture-based Computing and Visual Data Analysis. Gesture-based Computing (already much talked about) can recognize and interpret body motions i.e. one needn't learn to work with the computers but the devices can work reacting to one's gestures.

Secondly, is the Visual Data Analysis as an emerging field, a blend of statistics, data mining and visualizations. It makes it possible for anyone to sift through and display and understand complex concepts and relationships.

Academic librarians are required to be information creators , The information workers while collecting and analyzing data come across opportunities to deepen their knowledge and create information as a by- product of their every-day job

Academic libraries are experiencing the emergence of Scholarly Corroboration. Lest you should be left behind, the Academic Librarian should understand and recognize the emerging form of scholarly corroboration. This new form of authorizing/publishing/researching recognizes reader rating, inclusion of influential blogs, tagging, incoming links, and re-tweeting. These forms of scholarly corroboration (like giving links to blogs in research papers) are being considered for incorporation by important science publishers today.

Dissemination of information is gaining new relevance through the mobile phone platform. Mobile learning implies participating in learning activities anywhere, at anytime. mobile technology has for instance has facilitated download of course materials on to the mobile. Mobile technology offers vast potential as it allows instruction not only in the class room but also extra-mural, in all types of pedagogy like face-to-face, online and blended.

Through this phenomenon, Simple Augmented Reality required specialized equipment once and, hence, used to be expensive. Today it is getting portable on laptops and smart phones and, hence, cheap. It's getting widespread use in campuses. It is going to replace the great videos of one day and the way they were made.

Application of Web 2.0 and 3.0 in academic libraries has gained importance. Web 2.0, also known as Library 2.0, is user centered web, where blogs, wikis, social networks, multimedia applications, dynamic programming scripts are being used for collection, contribution and collaboration on the

web. The underlying principle is 'share the resources collectively'. Application of Web 2.0 in libraries has taken the libraries into a new generation. It is important for the librarians to experience Web 2.0 tools from a user's perspective and use these tools in modernizing library services. Alas, if you have not yet used web 2.0 tools, because web 3.0 is knocking at the doors!. Web 3.0, also known as semantic web, is smarter and can understand what you want. The searcher no longer need to wade through or filter out search results but get the target information straight by working on a combination of information based on requirement as he understands and preferences he wants i.e. one needs to be less specific and more natural with his queries. This obviously takes away the human factor that we once thought could not be replaced in the Library. However, this technology should aid the Academic Librarian in answering queries faster and accurately.

## Challenges

The new Mobile devices are changing the way information is delivered and accessed. Academic libraries are challenged to cope with this phase of information dissemination and access.

Patron-Driven Acquisition (PDA) of e-books has taken shape, textbook publishing houses link up with online stores to remain relevant in today's publishing industry. Licensing options and models for academic library dissemination of e-content is now yet to take shape.

Increasing digital information content has given rise to concerns about the general lack of long-term planning for their preservation. Google is leading in establishing architecture, policy, or standards for creating, accessing, and preserving digital content today. Academic libraries should grab the opportunity to partner as such.

Academic libraries must prove the value they provide to the academic enterprise

Information technology continues to evolve at a faster pace for academic libraries to cope. Despite this technology continues to drive much of the futuristic thinking within academic libraries.

The new Mobile devices are changing the way information is delivered and accessed. Academic libraries are challenged to cope with this phase of information dissemination and access.

Patron-Driven Acquisition (PDA) of e-books has taken shape, textbook publishing houses link up with online stores to remain relevant in today's publishing industry. Licensing options and models for academic library dissemination of e-content is now yet to take shape.

Also, data curation challenges are increasing as standards for all types of data continue to evolve; more repositories, many of them cloud-based, have emerge; librarians and other information workers now collaborate with their research communities to facilitate this process.

Higher education institutions are in a period of change from conventional classes and lectures to virtual environments. The trends the academic libraries are switching include provision of content to support online instruction and degree programs, globalization, and an increased skepticism of the “return on investment” in a college degree.

Scholarly publications and communication are developing at an ever-faster pace, requiring libraries to be actively involved or be left behind.

### Recommendations and Way forward

These expectations of users can be achieved with the help of conventional services but not to the maximum extent of user satisfaction. Hence the introduction of IT based activities in libraries has helped to satisfy the users. In order to provide proper user based services in academic libraries, professionals, have to look into the following aspects: Finding the needs and expectations of the users (Information Seeking Behavior), To build the proper and useful library collection this serves the need of the users, Provide the information services which fulfill the needs of the users, Use technology support to gather, collect and analyze the information and add the value to it, To use new tools of information resources like Internet, Searching the online databases to get the appropriate information required by the users from the various online resources and Understand the future needs of the users

With these aspects considered, the academic library users will get the required information from academic libraries

## Conclusion

Paradigm shift triggered by ICT has been a common phenomenon in service sector but applied to library and information science it has been radical and fundamental. It's no longer considered as doing one's daily business in a better way but basically in a different way. The way the users want to learn, research, publish or do work does undergo drastic changes from time to time with advancement of ICT (many changes are in the anvil). Librarianship should (as the teaching community does) run along and should not lag behind in supporting scholarship. If he fails he would be rendered obsolete and the library irrelevant. In the modern world of self-education and life-long education, librarian may be expected to keep abreast of the latest by his own. But it may not be case with all.

## References

1. Kebede, G. (2002). The changing information needs of users in electronic environments. *The Electronic Library*, Vol. 20. No. 1: 21 – 28.
2. Ani, Okon E. and Ahiauzu, B. (2008). Towards effective development of electronic information resources in Nigerian University Libraries. *Library Management* 29(6/7): 504 – 514.
3. Lee, Sul H. (2002). Significance of e-resources and collection development (pp. 20-32). New York: Haworth information press.
4. Dasgupta, A. and Satpathi J. N. (Eds.) (2007), *IASLIC: Challenges and Prospects*, Indian Association of Special Libraries & Information Centres, Kolkata.
5. Kohl, D. F. (2008), “Towards a New Understanding of the Library Mission: Vision and Implementation” in *Globalizing Academic Libraries: Vision 2020, 2009 proceedings of the international conference on academic libraries, Part I, New Delhi, 2009*, Mittal, New Delhi, pp1-8
6. Raitt, David (2005). *Electronic Library. The international journal for the application of technology in information environments*. Emerald Group Publishing, 2005.
7. Ambili, K. S. and Gokul, A. N.(2009), “Paradigm Shifts in LIS Profession and Implications of the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) Recommendations” in *Library Profession in Search of a New Paradigm 2008 proceedings of 23rd national seminar of IASLIC, Kolkata, 2008*, IASLIC, Kolkata, pp 3-11.
8. Johnson, L., Levine, A., Smith, R., & Stone, S. (2010). *The 2010 Horizon Report*. Austin, Texas: The New Media Consortium.
9. Aldrich, D.M., Stefanelli, G. Library services for the digital future. *Educause Quarterly* (<http://connect.educause.edu>)

10. Bawden, D. and Vilar, P. (2006). Digital Libraries: to meet or manage user expectations. ASLIB Proceedings, 58(4), 346-354([www.emeraldinsight.com](http://www.emeraldinsight.com))
11. Jeevan, V.K.J. (2007). Technology – enhanced services and the Librarian’s identity crisis in Academic and Research Libraries of India. Libri, 57 100-109.
12. Lili, L. (2006). Leveraging quality web based library user services in the digital age. Library Management, 27(6/7), 390-400
13. Patil, S.K., Dahibhate, N.B. and others. (2009). Information Audit: A practical Approach. National Seminar on Library and Information Services in changing era. 22-23 June 2009. Held at Pune University Jayakar Library Pune.
14. Poll, R. Measuring the impact of new library services (<http://www.ifla.org>)
15. Vinitha, K. (et al). (2006). Impact of ICT on library and information services. DRTC ICT Conference on digital learning environment. 11 to 13 Jan 2006.DRTC Bangalore.
16. Walimbe, S. (2009). Promoting library services and raising the library profile. National Conference on Putting Knowledge to work: Best practices in Librarianship. 1-2 May 2009 CDAC Mumbai.