

Public Libraries in Kenya: Collection Development

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Abstract

The public library should provide equality of access to a range of resources that meets the needs of its users for education, information, leisure and personal development. The library should provide access to the heritage of its society and develop diverse cultural resources and experiences. Constant interaction and consultation with the local community will help to ensure this objective. Collections complement services and should not be seen as an end in them, but their primary purpose is the preservation and conservation of resources for future generations. Large collections are not synonymous with good collections, particularly in the new digital world. The relevance of the collection to the needs of the local community is more important than the size of the collection. In this paper collection development in public libraries in Kenya mainly on acquisition during 2005-2009 and average books per KNLS library has been discussed.

Keywords: Public libraries, public library collection and collection development

1.1 Preamble

Prosperity, freedom and the development of society and individuals are fundamental human values. They will only be attained through the aptitude of well-informed citizens to exercise their democratic rights and to play a vigorous role in society. Productive contribution and the development of democracy depend on acceptable education as well as on free and unlimited access to thought, culture and information. As per UNESCO public library manifesto (UNESCO, 1994), the public library, the local gateway to information make available a basic condition for lifelong knowledge, sovereign decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups. Manifesto declares UNESCO's belief in the public library as a breathing force for education, culture and information, and as an indispensable agent for the nurturing of peace and spiritual wellbeing through the minds of men and women. UNESCO therefore supports national and local governments to maintain and actively take part in the development of public libraries.

The enormous amount of information produced per second worldwide front is a greatest challenges to library system more so the public libraries in the history of publication. With advancement of standards through IFLA/UNESCO public libraries are stirring from the conventional and conservative services to expansion of database and information sharing through network accessibility of resources. Public libraries crop up in multiplicity of societies, in different culture, historical background, technological and at different phases of economical development. However, their service delivery has universal characteristics although in a varied contexts in which they operate. They primarily provide resources in a variety of media to meet the both diverse users and needs. Public libraries represent an indispensable link in the scientific system chain, a crucial role link in the development and maintenance of wide range and intensity of knowledge modernization and ideas in society and at individual level.

1.2 Proposed Research

Many information scientists have used different terms for public library system study. The recognition of public library first took place in western-Saxon countries. The term public library first appeared in Latin (bibliotheca publica) as a technical term in 17th century to distinguish the general university libraries of Oxford and Cambridge by then from those of endowed libraries. The historical combination of the growth of printing, public education, democratic institutions and urbanization during 19th century led to the establishment and development of public libraries in USA and UK. UNESCO stated that 'the public library is the principal means whereby the records of man's thoughts and ideas and the expression of his imagination are made freely available to all' In 1977 D J Fosket describes the public library system as 'the central feature in the concept of whole entities, whose past are linked by specific pattern of relation; the system as a whole is greater than the mere sum of its parts by virtue of this pattern. Kumar (2004) defined public library system as 'a A combination of people, activities, events and object resources working together to convert inputs to outputs' Public libraries are libraries serving the community or region with multipurpose information-education –culture, agency in respect of information dissemination services, free of charge or at nominal fee (Thompson, 1974). The term system has been incorporated in the public libraries in recent development to denote all segments of the library i.e. legislation, funding, manpower, collection, services, building and ICT.

Although in practice all those segments are often inseparable in any public library

Public library .The Public Library is the local centre of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users.

The services of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status.

Kenya National Library Services (KNLS). The Kenya National Library Service (KNLS) Board is a national corporation established by an Act of Parliament, Cap 225 of the Laws of Kenya in 1965 the Board commenced its mandated functions in 1967. Board is empowered to develop public library services in Kenya to fill the vacuum that existed before and soon after independence regarding the provision of public library services hence bridge the level of literacy. The headquarters library in Nairobi opened its doors to the public in 1969. Currently, the Board is responsible for managing 8 libraries in 8 provinces and other 24 libraries spread throughout the country at district level.

Objectives of the study

The fundamental principle of creating a national public library network is to provide information and library services to users. The basic purpose of the study was to evaluate the performance of KNLS network, recourses, services, manpower, finance, legislation and ICT applications. The specific objectives of the study are:

- 1) To evaluate the performance of public library system in Kenya;
- 2) To suggest best policy on collection development public library and information services Kenya.

Hypotheses

The researcher, initiated the process of investigation, and so it resorted to the following hypothesis for the study:

- 1) Cultural and social situation of the country has its impact on public library system;
- 2) Public libraries in Kenya are economically disadvantaged;
- 3) Collection development public libraries in Kenya are in the developing stage;
- 4) Public libraries in Kenya are meant for student population.

Scope and limitations

Scope of the study was limited to the public library collection development and public library system in Kenya.

Methodology: Present study used survey method. A survey is one of the most effective and sensitive instrument of research which produces much needed knowledge

Total books acquired

An attempt was made to collect data on total library books Acquired by KNLS during 2005-2009 for the 32(100%) libraries, which is presented in table 1.1

Insert Table No 1.1 about here

The table no 1.1 shows the number of books purchased by KNLS, during the 2005-2009 years (five year period). During 2009 KNLS procure 35.50% books. 2008 KNLS procured 27.45% books. During 2007 17.75% books were procured. In 2006 financial year 13.32% were procured. During 2005 KNLS procured 5.97% books. It can be observed that there has been upward trend of books purchased by KNLS in recent time; however, the expenditure per book was found to be 4.75, 35. 67, 11.72, 6.32 while numbers of books acquired per registered member were 1.01. While as per public library service (2003) a growth of 2 books per capita would be a modest target. This is because of fluctuating income of KNLS.

Insert Table No 1.2 about here

The table 1.2 shows average number of books purchased for each library in Kenya. On an average 5010.10 books per library were purchased during last five years. While as per public library service (2003) annual acquisition of public libraries should range from 5000- 20000 volumes depending on the population served.

Conclusions

It is imperative that collections continue to be developed on an ongoing basis to ensure that people have a constant choice of new materials and to meet the demands of new services and of changing levels of use. In the light of today's technological advances, the policy must reflect not only a library's own collections but also strategies for accessing information available throughout the world. The policy should be based upon the needs and interests of local people, and reflecting the diversity of society. The policy should define the purpose, scope and content of the collection, as well as access to external resources.

Collection size is determined by many factors, including space, financial resources, catchment's population of the library, proximity to other libraries, regional role of the collection, and access to electronic resources, assessment of local needs, acquisition and discard rates, and policy of stock exchanges with other libraries.

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Table No 1.1: Total books (2005-2009)

Library name	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	Total
Nairobi	5011	6117	5851	7811	8914	33704
Buruburu	811	901	1141	2323	2751	7927
Mombasa	0	0	0	5218	5786	11004
Kwale		3001	2919	3117	4326	13363
Kilifi	0	0	449	685	1181	2315
Voi	0	0	0	343	551	894
Kisumu	1409	4009	5117	4181	7018	21734
Kisii	0	317	285	27	914	1543
Ukwala	56	1759	1267	2146	942	6170
Nyilima	616	424	719	738	1639	4136
Awendo	0	411	665	701	681	2458
Embu	0	0	787	1213	2331	4331
Meru	0	0	0	45	78	123
Mwingi	0	0	0	77	567	644
Kithasyu	0	0	0	210	997	1207
Nakuru	0	0	101	65	75	241
Eldoret	82	2385	0	1072	3118	6657
Kabarnet	0	91	0	789	56	936
Kericho	418	218	651	818	901	3006
Silibwet	0	0	0	273	415	688
Kapsabet	214	107	97	317	513	1248
Laikipia		401	507	771	685	2364
Rumuruti	0	0	0	197	75	272
Nyeri	0	0	5421	3215	2793	11429
Thika	321	564	77	5639	3261	9862
Naivasha	0	87	181	221	317	806
Karatina	598	332	883	410	3628	5851
Olkalou	0	0	0	291	577	868
Kakamega			818	119	975	1912
Garissa	0	0	34	431	97	562
Wajir	0	56	172	237	562	1027
Mandera	45	177	320	311	188	1041
Total	9581	21357	28462	44011	56912	160323
Growth rate	100%	122.91%	33.27%	54.63%	29.31%	

Table no 1.2: Average number of books per library

Year	Books Purchased	Average Books Per Library
2005	9581	299.41
2006	21,357	667.41
2007	28,462	889.44
2008	44,011	1375.34
2009	56,912	1778.50
Total	160,323	5010.10