Library Users, ICTs and Libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract

Modern information and communication technologies (ICTs) are having a tremendous impact on the library and information environment in the world. The availability of mobile technology devices such as laptops, netbook computers, tablet computers (tablets), and smartphones, among others; wireless broadband internet access; and web-based technologies and tools, including digital portals and social media; are slowly changing the way library and information users seek and access information and the way librarians and libraries respond to the needs of their clients. Taking these into account, the paper highlights the ICT situation in the library and information environment in Sub-Saharan Africa. Specifically, it focuses on ICTs and library users, ICTs and libraries, and strategies to enhance the adoption of ICTs and provision innovative library and information services to meet the demands of the users.

1.0 Introduction

In Sub-Saharan Africa, librarians largely operate within the confines of library buildings and library users are compelled to visit the buildings to obtain library and information services or use the facilities provided. Today, in an environment in which Helen Shenton, the former head of collection care for the British Library and former deputy and later executive director of the Harvard University Library said: “People want information ‘anytime, anyplace, anywhere’” (Shaw 2010: 36), operating and providing libraries and information services exclusively within the confines of physical libraries may not be the best arrangement for most people. This is because modern information and communication technologies (ICTs), mainly digital technologies such as high performance computer servers, broadband Internet, mobile devices (i.e. tablet computers and smart phones) and many others, are creating information users who want access to information 24/7. At the same time, modern ICTs is providing the librarians with the ability and capacity to deliver innovative library and information services to their users at anytime, anyplace and anywhere. Modern ICTs are a game changer in the library and information environment and it calls for librarians in Sub-Saharan Africa to reassess and
redefine their roles and approaches to information service delivery to meet the users’ information demands.

Since 1439, when Johannes Gutenberg invented the mechanical movable type printing, modern ICTs are the best thing ever to happen to librarians and libraries. Gutenberg’s invention paved the way for mass production of printed books which for centuries have been the main feature in libraries. This is now changing in the publishing industry, as “online delivery is challenging and replacing traditional channels” (Hunter & Brown, 2010:5). Increasingly, more and more information resources, including books, journal articles, reports, conference papers, etc. are born digital, stored and accessed digitally. This has implications for libraries and library users.

Modern ICTs is impacting on libraries and library users. As Shaw (2010:36) observes, library “users are changing - but so, too, are libraries. The future is clearly digital”. Building Future Libraries (2004: 4) also state that, “...the libraries of the 21st century are no longer simply familiar repositories for books. They have changed and expanded, been rethought and redesigned. Libraries now provide an increasing range of different services, using a multitude of media, and reach a more diverse audience than ever before”.

The key question is: are library users and libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa also changing?

2.0 Online Survey

To respond to the above question, an online survey (on eSurv.org) focusing on the profile of library users and ICTs in libraries in Anglophone Sub-Saharan Africa was carried out in April and May 2015. The objectives of the survey were to establish the:

- Current profile of library users;
- Status of ICTs in libraries;
- Key challenges to providing ICT-based library and information services.

The respondents were asked a series of questions soliciting their views, based on their personal experience and knowledge of the library and information environment in their countries of residence, on the following:

- **Library and information users**: profile of library users, especially their age groups and main area of activity or profession; ICT devices that most library users own or have access to; types of internet access available to most library users; and types of social media used by most library users;

- **ICTs in libraries**: levels of computerization of library functions; provision of access to Online Public Access Catalogues (OPACs); ICT devices and facilities provided to library users; and ICT-based library and information services provided to users;
• **Key challenges**: challenges faced by libraries/librarians in their efforts to provide ICT-based library and information services.

2.1 Target Respondents

The target audiences for the survey were library/information and ICT professionals based in Sub-Saharan Africa. The link to the online questionnaire was sent to 45 selected library/information and ICT professionals in the following 15 Anglophone countries: Botswana, Cameroon (bi-lingua), Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Purposive sampling technique was used for the survey. Almost all the respondents were selected from my professional networks and contacts. They were invited to participate in the survey based on their professional experience and the view that they would be in a position to paint an accurate picture about the profile of library users, and ICTs in libraries in their countries of residence. It was emphasized to all the respondents that the survey was not about their institutions or libraries, but about the general library and information environment in their countries of residence.

2.2 Response Rate

Forty-two respondents (93.33%) attempted the survey but only 34 (75.55%) completed all the questions and these were the ones used in the analysis and discussion in this paper. The 34 respondents were made up of 21 (61.76%) females and 13 (38.24%) males. The distribution of the usable responses per country is shown in Figure 1.

![Fig. 1: Usable responses per country](image-url)
2.3 Main area of specialization/work

Sixteen (47.06%) respondents indicated that they were working as librarians, 6 (17.65%) worked as automation/systems librarians, 4 (11.76%) were lecturers of library and information studies, 3 (8.82%) were knowledge managers, 3 (8.82%) were ICT experts, one (2.94%) was a training consultant, and another (2.94%) was a communication specialist.

2.4 Years of experience

Figure 2 below shows the distribution of the respondents in terms of the number of years of work experience.

Overall, the respondents had adequate experience to give an assessment of the ICT situation in the library and information environment in their countries of residence. Seventeen (50.00%) had at least 15 years and above of their work experience.

3.0 Profile of Library Users

Most library users in Sub-Saharan Africa are youth and are between 15 and 35 years old

Thirty-one (91.18%) respondents indicated that most library users in their country of residence were between the ages of 15 and 35 years old, and the remaining 3 (8.82%) indicated 35 to 50 years old. This shows that most library users in Sub-Saharan Africa are youth. The United Nations (UN) defines youth as all people aged 15 to 24 years old (UN 2006: 2), while the African Union (AU)’s definition refers to youth as every person between the ages of 15 and 35 years (AU 2006: 3). The AU’s definition is adopted in this paper.
The above finding is similar to the one on the study of the perceptions of public libraries in Africa by Elbert, Fuegi and Lipeikaite (2012) which reported that libraries in Africa are mainly used by young people, aged between 16 and 30 years old.

Despite most youth in Sub-Saharan Africa live in rural areas and small towns, the majority of library users are found in major cities and towns. As Nyana observes, “African governments do not have the luxury of building different types of libraries in each community, resulting in most rural communities having little or no access to library resources and services” (Nyana, 2009:10).

The implication of having the youth as the main library users is that library and information professionals in Sub-Saharan Africa have to design and deliver services that meet the needs of this highly mobile category of users. Today’s youth belong to the “Millennial” generation, defined as being born between 1979 and 2000 (Howe & Strauss). Presky, cited by Conway et al. (2008), indicates that the defining characteristic of the Millennial mindset is that they are “digital natives” and this has an impact on their information seeking behaviour and the format in which they want to access information. Citing several sources, Conway et al. (2008:9-10) further state that one thing that is certain about the information behaviours of the Millenial generation is their preferences against traditional libraries and for digital libraries. Therefore, digital-based library and information services are likely to be more appealing to the youth than traditional libraries and information services.

**Most library users in Sub-Saharan Africa are in school, especially in colleges and universities**

Out of 34 respondents that indicated the main occupation of most library users, thirty (88.24%) indicated that most of them were in colleges/universities, three (8.82%) indicated secondary schools, and one (2.94%) indicated that they were in employment. The study by Elbert, Fuegi and Lipeikaite (2012) also established that public library users have quite a high level of formal education, and either they had undertaken university or technical college studies, or had some secondary education or had completed secondary school education.

The youth (library users) in colleges and universities are pursuing their studies through various modes including full-time, part-time, and distance learning sometimes through online means. Therefore they are using libraries mainly to support their academic work. However, the youth also have a life outside the academic environment, in which their information needs are wide and varied and are shaped by several factors including their future career aspirations, hobbies, lifestyles, and others. Librarians should take keen interest in the youth’s information needs outside the academic environment as these are the ones that are having a greater impact on their preferred modes of accessing library and information services.
Most library users have access to ICTs, especially mobile devices

All the 34 respondents (100%) agreed that most library users have access to ICT devices and Figure 3 shows the types of devices.

It is important to note that 23 (67.64%) of the respondents indicated that library users have access to smartphones. It is now very common in Sub-Saharan Africa to see young people in colleges, universities and communities, some of whom have never used a Personal Computer (PC) before, using smartphones (i.e. iPhone, Blackberry, Samsung S3, etc.), and in some cases and tablet computers (i.e. iPads, Samsung Galaxy Tabs, etc.). Most of these modern ICTs tools used by the youth have more computer processing power than the computers used in 1969 by the US National Aeronautics Space Agency (NASA) to guiding crafts through outer space to the moon (Nick, 2014).

Mobile or cell phones are everywhere in Sub-Saharan Africa, and according to Sambira (2013: 19), "teenagers and young adults are obsessed by them, carrying them around everywhere". Among others, the youth are “using mobile phones for everything: communicating, listening to the radio, transferring money, shopping, mingling on social media and more” (Sambira, 2013: 19). Mwangi (2015) also indicates that modern ICTs are the most important communication tools for the youth as opposed to TV, books or newspapers on which the older generation largely rely on. The youth are relying on modern ICTs tools for voice communication, short messaging, email, and increasingly on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, among others (Mwangi, 2015: 23).

Considering that modern ICTs, especially smartphones is playing an important role in the daily lives of most library users and has become the main tool for communication, information access and sharing; providing library and information services accessed on
these tools should be a priority. This is one surest way for libraries to reach out to their mobile users at anytime, anyplace and anywhere.

**Most library users have access to broadband Internet**

Except for one (2.95%), all the remaining 33 (97.05%) respondents indicated that library users have access to broadband Internet, mainly on mobile devices such as tablet computers and smartphones. Library users also have access to the Internet in schools, homes, at work place and cyber café. User’s accessing broadband internet on mobile devices provides an opportunity to librarians to deliver library and information services that could be accessed at anytime, anyplace and anywhere.

There are already cases in the world where librarians, especially in academic libraries, are delivering ICT-based library (or mobile library or m-library) service to users to access on mobile devices. Starkweather and Stowers (2009:187) give examples of libraries at Abilene Christian University and Stanford University, in the United States, which have developed mobile applications to enhance student research, provide library instruction, and promote library services. Lippincott (2008) also highlights innovative ways in which some academic libraries are designing and delivering services around mobile technologies and mobile users. These include providing university-affiliated content for downloading to MP3 players and other devices; and providing podcasts and videos on information literacy and guest speaker lectures. Kroski (2008) highlights the common mobile-based services provided in the US to users and they include access to online catalogues, readers’ advisory apps, downloadable audio books, access to databases, text notifications and text reference.

**Most library users use Facebook and WhatsApp social media platforms**

Sharing information via social media platforms is on the rise among the youth in Sub-Saharan Africa. The main social media platforms used by most library users are Facebook and WhatsApp which were indicated by 31 (91.17%) and by 23 (79.58%) respondents respectively. Social media platforms are the meeting places for the youth. In fact the youth are more likely to visit social media platforms several times in a day than they would visit a library in a month or a year. Therefore, if librarians want to remain relevant to the youth, they may as well follow where the youth are – on social media. It makes sense for librarians to develop and deliver services that should be accessed through social media platforms to retain the interest of the youth in library services.

3.1 **Respondents’ comments on the profile of library users**

The respondents were asked to provide additional information /comments that would help in assessing the profile of library users. The following are some of the comments they provided:

- Many library users are now accessing information from the Internet;
• The young use the library as a study area more than to search for information, though hardcore researchers are many too;
• Most library users access or use Facebook, it’s now clear that many having smart phones, equally access and or use WhatsApp;
• Most users are interested in using the internet for personal development and skills enhancement;
• Most of the library users in our country respond well to social media such as Facebook postings, twitter, blogs and WhatsApp platforms;
• People in this country do not know about libraries until they are in tertiaries, this is because most if not all schools, do not have libraries at both primary and high school level.

4.0 ICTs in Libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa
Library automation initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa started in the 1970s, especially in South Africa and Nigeria, with efforts to computerize university library processes. However, successful implementation of library automation initiatives on a small scale, specifically in managing digital bibliographic databases, started in the 1980s. This followed the arrival of the IBM Personal Computer (PC) and IBM PC lookalikes that made it possible to use computers without the need for dedicated air-conditioned computer rooms (Hopkinson 2009). This situation suited the tropical hot and sometimes humid Sub-Saharan Africa where power can be erratic to reliably run the air conditioners for computer rooms. The availability of PCs also made it possible for several libraries and documentation centres in public institutions to benefit from international donor organizations’ and United Nations agencies’ led automation initiatives. For example, they benefited from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)’s Micro CDS/ISIS (Computerized Documentation Service / Integrated Set of Information Systems) initiative, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)’s International Environmental Information System (INFOTERRA), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)’s International System for Agricultural Science and Technology (AGRIS). The 1990s and 2000s saw an increase in library automation initiatives focusing on implementing integrated library systems. Today, several library systems are in use in libraries, among others they include Millennium Integrated Library System, Virtua, Adlib Information Systems, Koha (open source system), Libwin, SirsiDynix, Inmagic, and Aleph ExLibris. Some libraries also have a web presence and are offering remote access to internal or institutional repositories of full-text documents.

Most libraries have automated some of their functions
Twenty-three (67.64%) respondents indicated that most libraries have automated some of their functions, 8 (23.52%) reported automation of most of the library functions, one (2.94%) indicated all the library functions, and surprisingly 2 (5.88%) indicated that most libraries have not yet automated any of their functions. The library function automated by
most libraries is the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) and this was reported by 28 (82.35%) of the respondents.

Although since the 1970s, notable progress has been made in library automation in Sub-Saharan Africa, there are still a large number of libraries, especially public and school libraries that are yet to computerize their functions. This is also supported by the findings in the study by Elbert, Fuegi and Lipeikaite (2012) on the perception of public libraries among key stakeholders in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe which reported that the level of automation in the public libraries is quite low, computer and Internet services are not readily available across all libraries, and public library users rate ICT facilities in the libraries very low, and librarians skills in ICT as being poor. Of course there are several initiatives that are assisting public libraries to acquire ICTs. For example, the Electronic Information for Libraries (EILF), under its Public Library Innovation Programme (PLIP) with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, has supported public libraries in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia to use ICTs and to offer services that address community development issues focusing on agriculture, digital inclusion, education, employment, health, and supporting the needs of women and girls; and builds librarians to enable them to use ICT effectively (EILF, n.d.). Still more needs to be done to ensure that existing public and school libraries are equipped with modern ICTs so that they can serve their communities and users better. In general, public libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa are small in size and "under-resourced, and most people associate them with traditional book lending and reference services rather than innovation and technology" (Elbert, Fuegi & Lipeikaite, 2012).

Most libraries provide ICT facilities for use by users to access library services

All the 34 respondents provided information on ICT facilities provided to users and only differed on the types of services or facilities being provided. Twenty-eight (82.35%) indicated that most libraries provide access to the internet on library computers, 21 (61.76%) indicated that libraries provide personal computers for use by the users, 17 (50.00%) indicated provision of WiFi to library users, and 4 (11.76%) indicated provision of access to laptops/notebooks, and two (5.88%) access to mobile devices (i.e. iPads, Samsung Galaxy Tabs, etc.).

Most libraries provide access to external online information resources

Twenty-seven (79.41%) respondents indicated that most libraries were providing their users with access to external online information resources (i.e. online journals, e-books, etc.). Provision of access to full-text institutional repositories of local content, social media-based information services, and services targeting smartphones and mobile device users received mentions by 12 (35.29%), 8 (23.52%) and 2 (5.88%) respondents respectively. This is an indication that not much is going on in Sub-Saharan Africa regarding provision of access to local or institutional content, and targeted library and information services accessed on social media and mobile devices. For example, on 29
May 2015, OpenDOAR (Directory of Open Access Repositories) listed 2,873 repositories and only 116 (4.00%) were from Africa (OpenDOAR, 2015).

Access to affordable online resources, especially electronic journals has been made possible by several international donor and UN agencies’ led initiatives. Notable initiatives include the Research4Life programme by the World Health Organization (WHO), FAO, UNEP, and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO); and the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP)’s Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERI) that ran from 2002 to 2013. Together these initiatives have made it possible for libraries of all types, i.e. mainly libraries in public funded institutions, to provide their users with access to online scientific journals, books, and other resources worth millions of dollars, something they would not do with their own funding.


Under PERI, whose activities are now incorporated into INASPs Strengthening Research and Knowledge Systems (SRKS) programme, libraries were assisted in forming consortia and negotiating access to online resources at affordable cost. In 1998, PERI also initiated the African Journals Online (AJOL), a pilot project to promote the awareness and use of African-published journals in the sciences (AJOL, n.d). Today, AJOL, based in South Africa, is a not-for-profit company and provides access to over 400 African-published, peer-reviewed journals from 30 countries.

4.1 Respondents’ comments on ICTs in libraries

To help in assessing the ICT situation in libraries, the respondents provided several comments including the following:

- Most libraries are still in the process of automating their services;
- Most [libraries] lack the financial base to avail the necessary electronic information resources to their users;
- There is limited number of computers in libraries compared [to] the number of users;
- While most libraries provide access to internet through WiFi, the connection is so poor to the extent that many library users rely on personal computers connected to the internet;
• Development is towards access to e-journals, e-books and digital repositories. Social media is also aggressively taking root;

• There is standard availability of library resources but most provide just the basic and standard functions as opposed to offering more innovative and current resources of information sharing;

• Non-profit making and academic libraries have had free access to research and academic literature, courtesy of the Research4Life programmes (AGORA, HINARI and OARE) and the INASP PERI (University of Chicago, JSTOR, etc.). Open Access Journals and content freely accessible through Google Scholar, DOAJ, BioMed Central, etc., have also helped libraries to access more online academic and research content.

5.0 Key Challenges

Most libraries lack funds to purchase modern ICTs

Libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa face several challenges in their effort to use, provide ICT-based services, and manage the library ICT infrastructure. Some of the challenges faced “relate to acquisition of ICTs, preservation of electronic information resources, maintenance and security issues, training of users, and general lack of awareness and commitment among library stakeholders” (Emmanuel & Sife, 2008: 138). In most counties, libraries and library services do no feature high on the priorities of their parent institutions. In practical terms this is translated into little funding allocated to library services and facilities, resulting in funds to purchase or upgrade ICT equipment for the library being in short supply.

In the survey, the major challenges reported by more than 50.00% of the respondents are shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Frequency of Indications</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of funds to purchase modern ICTs tools/equipment</td>
<td>32 (94.11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of funds to subscribe to online resources (i.e. e-journals, e-books, databases, etc.)</td>
<td>23 (67.64%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of funds to maintain ICT tools/equipment</td>
<td>22 (64.70%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of ICT skills/personnel</td>
<td>20 (58.82%)</td>
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While most libraries lack funds to purchase commercial library systems, some libraries that have managed to automate all or some of their functions also lack funds to maintain and/or upgrade their systems. When libraries fail to pay maintenance or annual license fees for the software systems, they lose the right to access technical support and receive updates for their systems from the vendors. In the long run some libraries abandon the software system and look for cheaper alternatives. This option has included using Open
Source-based systems, which in most cases are also difficult to maintain or enhance due to lack of ICT skills in libraries.

6.0 Recommended Strategies

This paper avoids providing a shopping list of recommendations aimed at improving the ICT situation in libraries and provision of m-library services in Sub-Saharan Africa. It focuses only on three strategies that are feasible and can be implemented by the librarians in the region.

Librarians should make the best use of the ICTs available to deliver library and information services to mobile users

Most libraries (especially academic libraries) and librarians in general have access to some form of ICTs especially computers, smartphones, and the Internet. Librarians should develop the willingness, interest and enthusiasm to innovate and use the available ICTs to deliver information services to their users. Library users are adopting modern ICTs at a very fast pace. The decision to either provide traditional library services within the confines of physical library buildings or deliver innovative and ICT-based services to users at anytime, anyplace and anywhere is entirely up to the librarians. They (libraries and librarians) cannot afford to stay still. The Internet is slowly catching up with the library and information business in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Librarians should take keen interest and get involved in national and regional development agendas

Despite the potential to contribute to development, libraries in most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are not a priority. This situation is exacerbated by the librarians’ inability to actively participate in discussions of national and regional development issues. As a result, most library associations rarely implement development programmes and projects that address the development goals of their communities, countries and regions. Active participation in development initiatives could enhance the libraries’ visibility and possibly attract funding for library activities and ICT initiatives.

In June 2014, the Heads of State and Government of the African Union, in the Malabo Declaration, committed to ending hunger in Africa by 2025, and resolved to create and enhance the necessary appropriate policy and institutional conditions and support systems to facilitate, among others, supply of appropriate knowledge, information, and skills to users (AU, 2014: 4).

Soon it will also be time for the post-2015 development agenda that will usher in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Information and knowledge will be a major input in all the proposed 17 SDGs. Libraries will be expected play an important role in the proposed SDG 4 - Ensure
Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All and especially in ensuring that the following Target 4.7 is realized:

by 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.).

How many librarians or library associations in Sub-Saharan Africa and to what extent have they been engaged with the relevant national or regional authorities to articulate their potential contributions to the above two development agendas?

AfLIA should establish a forum to focus on and advocate for innovative use of ICTs in libraries

Although the use of modern ICTs in libraries is a highly specialized area, there is an absence of forums or interest groups in Sub-Saharan Africa to:

• Facilitate the exchange of knowledge on innovative application of ICTs to library and information work;
• Advocate for increased investments in ICT facilities for libraries and information disseminations.
• Implement capacity development initiatives in the use and management of ICTs in libraries.

The American Library Association (ALA) has a division, the Library and Information Technology Association (LITA), which leads ALA’s initiatives in “exploring and enabling new technologies to empower libraries” (LITA, nd). LITA’s “membership includes new professionals, systems librarians, library administrators, library schools, vendors and anyone else interested in leading edge technology and applications for librarians and information providers” (LITA, n.d).

The situation is the same in the United Kingdom, where the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) has a special interest group on Multimedia Information and Technology (MmIT). The Group "aims to unite CILIP members engaged, in, or interested in, multimedia information and technology developments in library and information science" (CLIP, n.d.)

As matter of urgency, individuals and institutions with a strong interest in ICTs in libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa, should establish a forum for the exchange of knowledge and discussion of strategies to guide the development and innovative use of ICTs in libraries.
7.0 Conclusion

The youth, who are the major library users in Sub-Saharan Africa, are adopting modern ICTs, especially mobile devices, at a very fast rate. Potentially, this allows them to access library and information services at anytime, anyplace, and anywhere. Unfortunately, most libraries are unable to meet the emerging demands of the youth to potentially have access to library and information services 24/7. The libraries lack funds to acquire modern ICTs tools, funds to maintain and upgrade already installed library systems, and skills to implement innovative ICT-based library and information services.

Although several reasons have been advanced (Coyle 1997; Herring 2010, Shea 20914) as to why the Internet is not a substitute for libraries, it should be acknowledged that in an environment where most public supported university libraries are underfunded and thus are unable to acquire up-to-date information resources from their own budgets; public libraries are only available in major cities and most of them are in a poor state; and most public schools do not have viable libraries; it is possible that in most cases the Internet is the only form of “library” available and accessible to the youth. The Internet is a major source of information for both academic and leisure/entertainment purposes for the youth.

Librarians and professional library associations must ensure that libraries do not stand still. They should innovate to deliver appropriate information services to their mobile users. They should also participate actively in forums addressing national and regional development agendas to articulate the library and information profession’s potential contributions to development. This will contribute to enhancing the profession, the role of libraries in development, and potentially attract funding for libraries services. There is need for a regional forum to advocate for improved and innovative use of ICTs in libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

References


