



## REVIEW ARTICLE

### THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN FACILITATING POST GRADUATE STUDIES: A CASE STUDY OF MASENO UNIVERSITY, KENYA

\*Peter Abraham Lisero

Department of Library and Information Science, Maseno University, Kenya

#### ARTICLE INFO

##### Article History:

Received 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2018  
Received in revised form  
25<sup>th</sup> March, 2018  
Accepted 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2018  
Published online 30<sup>th</sup> May, 2018

##### Keywords:

Postgraduate, Library, Research,  
Academic Libraries, Maseno.

#### ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of academic libraries in provision of library services to post graduate students of Maseno University, Kenya. Academic libraries play a very important role for postgraduate students in terms of research. The findings reveal that most of the respondents visited library to surf the internet, consult reference materials, to get data on primary and secondary sources of materials, to consult books, theses and dissertations among others. However lack of e- journals, inadequate information materials, limited operational hours and inconsistent internet were identified as major obstacles in effective use of library. The findings of this study will be helpful to the University Council.

Copyright © 2018, Peter Abraham Lisero. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

#### INTRODUCTION

In academic institutions of higher learning, scholars and researchers regard library as their research territory. No doubt that library is considered as a nerve center of research activities. According to Krolak (2006), "Libraries assist in finding, using and interpreting appropriate information that opens up opportunities for lifelong learning, literacy enhancement, informed citizenship, recreation, creative imagination, individual research, critical thinking, and ultimately, empowerment in an increasingly complex world." This equitable access to information is essential to enable educated and informed citizens to participate in a democratic global community. The traditional role of university and college libraries has been to support teaching and learning. These academic libraries derived their mission from that of the parent organization, the university or college, and the focus was on undergraduate education where learning was important. The academic libraries provided books and other printed materials, and later electronic materials, and space for students to study. The libraries also provided services, such as compiling bibliographies, reference services and information literacy classes, for students and academic staff to help them find the materials they needed. Today research plays an important part in almost all universities and in many colleges. While teaching and learning are still important, research is becoming increasingly emphasized.

\*Corresponding author: Peter Abraham Lisero,  
Department of Library and Information Science, Maseno University,  
Kenya.

Universities are making larger allocations for research, they being ranked on their research output, university staff are being assessed on the number of research papers published, and the research infrastructure is also being improved. Most universities are also increasing their postgraduate population, where a research project is generally a requirement for completion of the degree. The university library supports course curriculum and assists researchers to extend their research work and create new knowledge successfully (Higham, 1980). Furthermore, Young and Belanger (1983) defined the university library as "a library, or system of libraries, established, supported and administered by a university to meet the information needs of its students, faculty and support its instructional research and service programs". These services are needed to enable an individual to develop full potentials and extend the horizons of perception, interests, and skills. 'Specific services and materials must be provided for those users who cannot, for whatever reason, use the regular services and materials, for example linguistic minorities, people with disabilities or people in hospital or prison. All age groups must find material relevant to their needs. Collections and services have to include all types of appropriate media and modern technologies as well as traditional materials. High quality and relevance to local needs and conditions are fundamental. Material must reflect current trends and the evolution of society, as well as the memory of human endeavour and imagination. Collections and services should not be subject to any form of ideological, political or religious censorship, nor commercial pressures.' (IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, 1994)

## Literature Review

Nonetheless, many documents refer to the role of university libraries in facilitating research. The Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) Strategic Plan 2003-04 refers to improving access by the students and staff of Australian universities to the information resources that are fundamental to the advancement of research. Among the goals in the Strategic Plan are to maximize the potential of libraries to contribute to research (Council of Australian University Librarians, 2003). Previous literature on the role of academic libraries in facilitating research has acknowledged that academic libraries play a pivotal role in ensuring the success of research. With greater attention on research given by universities, the considerable amount of literatures has showed that libraries have put more emphasis on their services as compare, to research facilities. Kaufman (2005) highlighted that what academic libraries are doing today is not like those of the past, even the future. Ka (2005) suggested that university libraries play a significant role in supporting research. University libraries do not just store books and journals and offer space for student learning, but they also provide systematically digitized information. University libraries, as they become more and more digitized, will play an important role in offering a greater support service for young professors and PhD students which will help in the development of their academic careers. Singh (2007) showed that research is taking on increasing importance in universities and colleges. Universities are making larger allocations for research and the rank of university is based on their research outputs.

In order to satisfy the stakeholders of academic libraries, the role of academic libraries in facilitating research have to be re examined. In doing so, academic libraries could provide more effective services and supports to their users. Webb (2007) highlighted that the effective academic library are gateways to academic knowledge through their own collection and by facilitating access to material. In the line with its core purpose, providing effective library services could support the research activities of researchers. Haglund (2008) indicated that university libraries are dedicated to what they perceive as the needs of students and researchers at the university. Otherwise, they could not effectively assist the research activities, nor could they contribute to the university's research. Even though the literature has indicated that academic libraries play a significant role on facilitating research, the overall support of academic libraries for research was not strategic. Instead of developing an extensive research collection, the libraries relied heavily on inter-library loans to support research (Patterson 2009). Simmonds (2001) found that the use of academic libraries is influenced most by users' perceived familiarity with the library and its resources. Those who are more familiar with the library are more likely to use academic libraries. To motivate the greater usage of libraries, librarians need to educate users on how to use library resources not only in the confines of the library building, but even when they access the resources remotely. Rowley (2004) pointed out that librarians can promote the research culture among researchers. Currently, libraries are undergoing continual changes and development as library managers, information professionals, and knowledge workers need to manage and understand these changes to respond to the dynamic environments. Researchers could benefit from these changes. As the academic

environment is constantly changing, and with universities increasing their emphasis on research, academic libraries need to re-examine their role in assisting the users in their research. While there is much literature on the importance of academic libraries in assisting university research in general, there is little on the needs of specific groups of researchers, including the postgraduate students. Apart from Ka (2005) and Singh (2007) mentioned above, little was found on the needs of postgraduate students, their perceptions, usage and assessment of academic libraries.

## Research Design

To examine the role of academic libraries in facilitating research at Maseno University Kenya, a paper based questionnaire survey was designed and pre-tested on 20 postgraduate students.

### The final questionnaire was formed based on pre—tested comments

The revised questionnaire was distributed among postgraduate (Masters and Doctoral) Students of Maseno University. The researcher visited the School of Graduate Library for data collection purpose. The SGS library was selected for the distribution of questionnaire because, libraries are considered as a hub of research activities in academic environment. The researcher randomly selected respondents from the reading halls & reference sections of School of Graduate Library. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed among postgraduate students and analysis was done on 75 (75%) respondents who returned questionnaires.

## RESULTS

### Respondents Background information

A total of 75 respondents were selected from Maseno SGS Library. Of the 75 Respondents, 50 (66.7%) were male and 25 (33.3%) were female. All were Maseno University students. In terms of faculty of study, the largest number of respondents (33.7%) were from faculty of Arts, followed by 20 (26.7%) from Faculty of Economics, 10 (13.3%) were from Public Health and 20 (26.7%) from Education Faculty. As per the level of study, a total of 60 (80%) respondents were studying at master level, while the remaining 15 (20%) were in their PhD Program. Among these respondents, majority of the postgraduate students were 30 (40%) were required to do project research programme. The students were given three questions relating to the option to what resources they have accessed from the SGS library majority of them 60 (%) accessed internet services via Wi-Fi, 10(%) accessed through print materials and the remaining (5 %) accessed non print materials

### Library resources and services for research

The respondents were asked to specify what type of library resources they accessed in this part, a 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the important and satisfaction level of respondents in SGS library in Maseno. The respondents were highly satisfied 60 (80%) with Wi-Fi internet services as compared to other library resources for research.

**Table 1. Gender Distribution of the Respondents N=75**

Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Male	50	66.7
Female	25	33.3
Total	75	100

Respondents also showed below average access to print material 10 (13.3%). Respondents also showed their dissatisfaction with library's non print materials reflecting 5 (6.7%) Respondents suggested that the Maseno university school of graduate should update their studies print resources especially books and journals. On other hand, respondents were also more satisfied with internet services.

**Table 2. Faculty of the Respondents N=75**

Faculty	No. of respondents	Percentage
Arts	25	33.3
Economics	20	26.67
Education	20	26.67
Public Health	10	13.3
Total	75	100

Table 2 shows faculty representation. 25 (33.3%) of the respondents were from faculty of Arts. 20 (33.3%) of the respondents came faculty of economics, 20 (33.3%) of the respondents came faculty were from Education faculty while 10 (13.3%) were from Public Health.

**Table 3. Level of studies of the respondents N=75**

Level of study	No of respondents	Percentage
Masters	60	80%
PhD	15	20%
Total	75	100

Table 3 shows that 60 (80%) of the respondents were pursuing Masters while 15 (20%) of the respondents were Doctorate students.

**Table 4. Course work Distribution of the Respondents N=75**

Course work	No. of respondents	Percentage
Project	45	60
Thesis	30	40
Total	75	100

Table 4 shows that 45 (60%) of the respondents were doing project work 30 (40%) were doing thesis.

**Table 5. Resource access Distribution of the Respondents N=75**

Resource Access	No. of Respondents	Percentage
WI - FI	60	80
Print Materials	10	13.3
Non Print Materials	5	6.7
Total	75	100

Table 5 shows that 60 (80%) of the respondents accessed WI - FI. On the other hand 10 (13.3%) accessed print materials while 5 (6.7%) accessed non print materials.

## Conclusion

This research was intended to examine the perceptions of postgraduate students on the role of academic libraries in facilitating research the findings indicate that the academic

library in Maseno University of Kenya plays a relevant role to assist students and their research activities respondents were generally satisfied with their resources and services, which are available in the library, for instance respondents acknowledged that Wi-Fi role has greater value for helping their research. In addition, the respondents were dissatisfied with certain facilities such as print resources. They suggested that the library should update its print collection with latest books and journals so that postgraduate students could obtain the latest information for their research. The findings of this study would help academic libraries to re-evaluate their resources and services for research activities. The results could assist libraries not just to improve their services and launch new services, but to avoid frustrations and difficulties faced from research activities. The environment is unpredictable changing; academic libraries have to maintain their position as key partners in research by anticipating, understanding, and stressing the challenges in new research activities. Undoubtedly, this opens up possibilities for libraries in improving the quality of existing services and making flexible new services to effectively support research activities.

## Recommendations

This research recommends that Maseno University postgraduate library should re-evaluate its resources and services for research activities with challenges in new research activities. This will undoubtedly open up possibility for the library in improving the quality of existing services and making flexible new services to effectively support research support research activities

## REFERENCES

- Higham and Norman, 1980. *The Library in the University: Observation on a service*: London: Andre Deustsch. IFLA /UNESCO (1994) Public Library Manifesto.
- Ka and Wai Fan. 2005. *The role of university libraries in supporting research in Hong Kong: facing a new challenge*. Campus-Wide Information Systems, Vol. 22, no.1: 43-50.
- Krolak and Lisa, 2006. *The Libraries in the creation of Literature environment*. International journal Of Adult and Lifelong Education, 4(1/4).
- Rasul, Aamir and Singh, Diljit, 2010. *The role of academic libraries in facilitating postgraduate students research*. Malaysian Journal of Library and Information Science, 15 (3), 75 - 84
- Rowley and Jennifer, 2004. *Researching people and organizations*. Library Management, Vol. 25, no.4/5: 208-214.
- Singh and Diljit, 2007. *The role of the academic library in facilitating research: perceptions of postgraduate students*. In Abrizah Abdullah et al. (eds). *Building an information society for all*: Proceedings of the International Conference on Libraries, Information and Society, ICoLIS 2007, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, 26-27 June 2007.