Library Spaces and Facilities Status in Academic Libraries in Kenya

Milcah Gikunju[1], Damaris Odero[2]& Tom Kwanya[3]
[1,2]Department of Library, Records Management and Information Studies
School of Information Sciences,
P. O Box 3900-30100,
Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya
Tel: +254 722916188
Email: gikunjum@uonbi.ac.ke, oderodjn@mu.ac.ke
[3]Department of Information and Knowledge Management
The Technical University of Kenya
Tel: +254 717318853
Email: tkwanya@tukenya.ac.ke

Abstract
In the global sphere, debate on physical library spaces is increasingly gaining popularity. A key aspect in the debate is the shifting nature of the physical library spaces influenced by issues such as libraries moving from print to electronic resources and becoming more of learning centres as well as collaborative spaces. The change in pedagogy where learning activities are now inclined to collaboration and group projects that necessitate new physical library spaces that are in line with the new purposes in teaching and learning styles that better meet users' needs. Unfortunately, research on physical library spaces and facilities in Kenyan academic libraries is limited. It is on this strength that this paper reports on a study that sought to explore the status of physical library spaces in Kenyan academic libraries as well as library users' physical space preferences. The study achieved this by assessing the current status of library spaces in Kenya university libraries and exploring the library space preferences of the university library users in Kenya. The study was anchored on Henri Lefebvre's spatial theory 'The Production of Space'. The sample size was 1288 academic staff, 1467 students, 6 university librarians and 6 librarians focus groups drawn from 6 universities in Kenya (3 public and 3 private) in 2021/2022. Research was conducted using pragmatic research paradigm and a convergent mixed methods design and employed multiple case studies strategy. The qualitative data was thematically analysed while descriptive statistics was used in analyzing the quantitative data. The key findings show that academic libraries in Kenya have far and large similar library spaces as well as facilities that are blended between traditional and modern. Quiet study spaces, spaces to browse current print books and journals, and spaces to explore and use new technologies ranked as the most desired features in the library. Chi-Square tests revealed that adequate space availability in the university libraries is a significant predictor of general user satisfaction with library spaces. The study concludes that in spite the value attached to the existing library spaces, the library spaces are insufficient to support academic and research works. Based on the findings, the study recommends the need to provide different types of library spaces in order to cater for the different categories of library users. For instance, there are library users who prefer quiet study spaces while others prefer space for discussions.
Keywords: Academic libraries, physical library spaces, library users' preference, changing users' needs, Kenya