Users' awareness, perceptions and usage of Makerere library services in the main and selected branch libraries

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Abstract: Academic libraries have a mandate of enhancing teaching and research missions of their parent institutions through provision of library services. This paper shares findings of a study which investigated users' awareness, perceptions and usage of Makerere University Library (MakLib) Services in the Main Library and selected branch Libraries. The study adopted a qualitative approach. The researcher interviewed 94 in total; 54 users were from the Main Library, 21 were from the CEES library, while 19 were from Sir Albert Cook Medical Library. The interview schedule consisted of both open and closed questions to enable the participants to express their views and answer the why and how questions. The findings from the study indicated that major category of library users are undergraduate students; that more users visit the Main Library compared to the other two branch libraries; showed a good rating of the quality of services provided by MakLib; as well as a good rating of MakLib staff. The rate of awareness of some Library services was however rated low, yet Usage of library and information services has a direct linkage to awareness of users about those services. To address some of the issues raised by the findings, this study recommended further promotion and marketing of library services using diverse approaches in order to enhance users' awareness and increase Usage of all library services; continuous improvement of the end-user training programmes and ensuring that there are sufficient networked computers with fast Internet connectivity.

1. Introduction
Demonstrating values for university stakeholders has become an increasingly important activity in academic libraries around the world. The concept of library services and values can be defined as value for users in the level of support and services provided; value for the parent institution in contribution to

institutional missions and goals; or economic value for return on investment. To remain relevant to the communities they serve, it is very important for academic libraries to consider their users' views (Rocio, Lotero & Rua, 1987). MakLib services were investigated to conform to the International Federation of Library Associations & Institutions (IFLA) guidelines which advocate for high standards in the provision of Library and Information services.

Background

Makerere University was founded in 1922 and is one of the oldest universities in East Africa. From a Technical School, it later progressed into Uganda Technical College and started training teachers. In 1937, the Technical College advanced into a Higher Education Institute, offering certificate courses and eventually became a University College when it entered into a special relationship with the University of London in 1949 (Macpherson, 1964). Makerere also started offering courses leading to general degrees of the University of London. Then it became University of East Africa for Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. It finally became an independent National University on 1st July 1970 after an Act of Parliament, offering undergraduate and postgraduate courses and awarding its own degrees.

Today, Makerere University Estate is spread over three campuses. The main campus which covers 350 acres of land is located on Makerere hill, 5 km from Kampala, the capital city. The College of Health Sciences covers 45 acres and is located on Mulago hill adjacent to the National Referral hospital, 2 km from the main campus. The Agricultural Research Institute is located 25 km from the main campus. The College of Veterinary Medicine also has a 650-acre Buyana farm located 55 kms from the main campus (Makerere University fact book, 2011/12).

2. Literature review

2.1 Users' awareness

Lack of knowledge among library users of the services their university libraries provide is a growing concern in academic librarianship. This has been caused by poor communication and inadequate interaction between users and the library, coupled with the library′s failure to apply marketing strategies to promote its services (Roberts, 1995).

If the library is to promote awareness of its services and activities, there must be continual interaction with its users, This Interaction can be influenced both by factors directly related to the library, such as how efficiently and effectively it is run, the relevance of the information it provides and the communication channels it employs (Rocio, Lotero & Rua, 1987).

Whereas libraries use different activities to create awareness about service, literature shows that in other instances awareness can result from family and friends, or under self-tuition. Hinson and Amidu (2006) reveal that the majority of the final year students in the University of Ghana Business School are aware of the internet, having been introduced to it by family and friends, or under self-

tuition. With respect to obstacles to internet use, the majorities of the students have difficulty in accessing the internet and thus consider lack of access to be an obstacle to its use.

2.2 Users' perception

There is a call from university administrators asking library directors to demonstrate their library's value to the institution" (Kaufman, 2008). Due to these increased calls for accountability, libraries have been stimulated to study the perception of users' on library services in anticipation that it is a key factor in determining usability of these services.

Service perception is the users' judgment and evaluation of a service performance received and how it compares to their need (Jiang and Wang, 2006). Since University libraries are an integral part of the education system, how they are perceived determines their smooth existence and value to the users. Academic Libraries should therefore contribute to the goals of the system as a whole and respond to the changing social needs.

Muddiman (2000) discovered that research has an important role in shifting the institutional core of the library service and innovating newer social roles, particularly as a way of identifying the reading and information needs of library users. This indicates that research about users has an invaluable contribution not only to the library services but to the parent institution as well.

2.3 Library Usage

"Many academic libraries are currently caught between pressures of increasing library usage and reduced budgets" (KamraRaj, 2005).This has partly been caused by the increase in number of students admitted to the universities in the last few years. Together with the introduction of new courses, this has stressed the library demand. Students need new books and journals for academic excellence, as well as research, study and teaching for lectures. Many studies have been carried out on the use of academic libraries. Williams (1995) discovered that students who are very active in class, and who read, write and study more are consistent and regular library users.

Fowowe (1989) realized that there are differences in the regularity of library use by faculty and students. He states that 94.8% of students use library facilities, leaving a small percentage to the staff. Students mainly use the library for class work, research, discussions and leisure among other purposes.

3. Methodology

The study used a qualitative approach. Face-to-face interviews were used to capture users' views about library services with particular reference to awareness, perceptions, and usage of MakLib services. Interviews enabled face-to-face interaction between the researcher and participants, and allowed further explanation of library services where need arose.

The study selected three libraries that is: the Main Library, Albert Cook library and College of Education and External Studies (CEES) Library to represent the 10 branch/college libraries. The Main Library was selected because it is the centre where all the branch libraries report and library users of all subject disciplines come for Library services. The Albert Cook Library was selected because it is the biggest branch library while the CEES library was selected because it is the 2nd biggest branch library. Coincidentally, the former serves Medical and other health science students while the latter serves Arts, Humanities and Science Education. This enabled the researcher to get both scientists' and Artists' library users' views.

The researcher set out to select some 120 library users in total, 80 from the Main library, 20 from Albert Cook Library, and 20 from CEES library. This was guided by a study conducted by Musoke & Mwesigwa (2012), who looked at 110,300 users that entered the library in 10 days according to the Book check system records at the MakLib exit. Basing on this, the researcher therefore considered that on average, users who came to the library in one day were 11,030, and took 1.1 % of this number to get a sample population of 80 participants from the main Library, 20 from Albert Cook Library and 20 from the CEES library respectively. This sample size was further supported by Cook, Heath & Bruce (2001) in a study entitled "Users' hierarchical perspectives on Library service quality" where they selected 1.0% of veterinary medicine students as a sample population. After data collection however, the final number of participants came to 94 in total; 54 users were from the Main Library, 21 were from the CEES library, while 19 were from Sir Albert Cook Medical Library. The final sample size depended on when the data got saturated.

Differing from the earlier short survey by Namaganda & Sekikome (2011), which used convenience sampling technique, this research adopted a purposive sampling method with an aim of selecting users who visit the library at least twice a week. This sampling technique was based on a study conducted by Shokeen and Kaushik (2002), who investigated the information-seeking behavior of social scientists and found that a significant number of library users visit the library twice a week.

In addition to interviews, the researcher reviewed relevant documents both print and electronic relevant to the topic of study to establish facts about the student and staff figures, library services and plans. These included: Makerere University Strategic plan (2007/08-/2017/18), Makerere University Library Strategic Plan (2007/08-/2017/18), Commissioning of the Makerere University Main Library New Building Extension (Musoke, 2012), Makerere University admission lists (2011/12), Makerere University Organizational Manual (2011), Makerere University Research Manual, (2011), Makerere University Annual Report (2011) and Makerere University Fact Book (2011/12).

4. Discussion of findings

This section presents the findings of the study and the interpretations based on data collected by interviews, and in some cases documentary evidence. To maintain consistency, the findings are presented in light of the themes and objectives of the study. The major sections of this chapter include: users' awareness, perceptions, usage of MakLib services, and users' suggestions on how to improve those services. Targeting those who visit the library at least twice a week, a total of 94 willing participants, categorized as MakLib users, and who happened to be within reach either at Makerere University Main Library, or at the two selected branch libraries were interviewed using an interview schedule.

4.1 Category of Library Users

The categories of Makerere library users who participated in this study as participants are undergraduate students, postgraduate students, teaching staff and registered external users (those who are neither students nor staff of Makerere University).

Table 1: Category of Library users who participated in the study

Category of library users	Frequency	Percentage
Undergraduates	71	75.5
Post graduates	16	17.0
Teaching staff	2	2.1
External users	5	5.3
Total	**94**	**100.0**

Table 1 shows that the majority of participants that is; 71 (75.5 %) were undergraduate students, followed by 16 (17.0%) who were post graduate students, 5 (5.3%) were external users, and only 2 (2.1%) of the participants were teaching staff. Having undergraduate students as the majority of the participants directly concurs with the admission lists of Makerere University, where very high numbers of undergraduate students (17,602) were enrolled compared to postgraduate students (2,333) in the academic year 2011/2012 (Makerere University Fact Book 2011/12). In this study, therefore, undergraduate students form the majority of participants since they constitute the biggest population of the entire university. These findings also agree with earlier findings reported by Namaganda & Sekikome (2011) which indicated that the majority of the participants were undergraduates (74.5%), as well as those of Musoke & Mwesigwa (2012) where 99% of the total respondents were undergraduates, and only 1% were postgraduates. A study carried out by Zhang et al (2010) in China, however, contradicted these results when it showed that most library users were graduate students.

In terms of distribution of participants according to the libraries involved, Makerere University Main Library had the biggest percentage of participants compared to Sir Albert Cook and CEES libraries, as indicated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 showing percentage distribution of participants according to Library
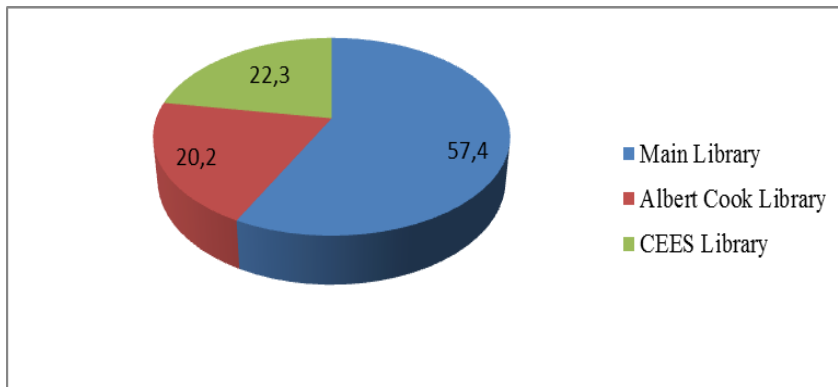
Of the total participants involved in the study, 54 (57.4%) were users from Makerere University Main Library, 21 (22.3%) and 19 (20.2%) were users from Sir Albert Cook and CEES libraries respectively. More users visit the Main Library compared to the other two branch libraries because it provides diverse information that meet information needs of different categories of users while some of the branch libraries provide specialised information. For example, Sir Albert Cook is a medical library which mainly provides medical and health sciences information while CEES library serves Arts, Humanities and Science Education. Furthermore, the main Library opens for longer hours than the branch libraries.

Table 3 shows Users' Awareness of Library Services

Library services	Number of participants	Participants aware	Rate of awareness (Percent)
Reference services	94	52	55.3%
Book loan services	94	48	51%
Electronic services	94	44	46.8%
Document Delivery Services (DDS)	94	8	8.5%
Library user training services	94	25	26.5%

Photocopying services	94	57	60.6%
Binding services	94	31	32.9%
Secretarial services	94	18	19.1%
Digitisation services	94	13	13.8%
Other services (CAS & SDI)	94	10	10.6%

Most participants were aware of Photocopying (60.6%), Reference (55.3%) and Book loan services (51%). The services that were least known to participants included; Document Delivery Services (8.5%), Digitization services (13.8%), Secretarial services (19.1%) and others which included Current Awareness Services (CAS) and Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI). In relation to reference services, the findings of this study concur with those of Onifade and Sowole (2011) that indicated high awareness of reference services in Nigerian universities.

Surprisingly, a significant number of participants (73.7%) were unaware of library user training services yet it is included in the orientation program for new students every academic year. It has however been observed that the library user training schedule coincides with lectures leaving students with limited time to attend. This problem needs to be addressed not only by the library but the University administration at large. In agreement with these findings, Musoke & Mwesigwa (2012) also reported that it was clear from their study that there was need to increase the number of regular End-user training programmes for the undergraduate users, in addition to the annual library freshmen's orientation programme.

Popoola (2008) study likewise recommends library management to create faculty awareness about the available information products and services. This could be done through planned public relations programmes, library weeks, study tours, user education programmes, library awards night and librarian making contact with the faculty staff to improve communication links with the latter.

4.2 Users' Perceptions about MakLib Services
Library users were asked their perceptions in terms of usefulness of the services, sufficiency of the services, availability of staff, competence and attitude of staff providing the services. Due to the fact that MakLib offers a wide range of services and products with an increasing diverse user group, the researcher used pre-set levels to determine users' perceptions of the services as this would be expedient to the participants.

Table 4: General perceptions of Library Services according the participants

	Particip ants (Total No.)	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Not sure
Usefulness of services	94	27	40	22	6	4
Sufficiency of services	94	9	48	28	9	7
Availability of staff	94	30	45	19	2	4
Competence of staff	94	21	46	13	2	18
Attitude of staff	94	17	46	27	5	5

The table above shows general perceptions about MakLib services where majority of the participants perceived library services as either Good or very Good, with very few rating the services as poor. The above findings concur with what Edison (2000) asserted that reference librarian's special training and subject skills will help mediate user information needs, and that Librarians should develop the competencies they need to be more successful.

The participants were asked to explain the choice of their answers. Those who perceived the

Services as very Good or Good gave the following explanations for their choices.

"….because I receive answers to my requests"

"….access services whenever i want"

"….obtain adequate information from the library"

"….useful references"

"….very convenient"

"….because you get knowledge and information"

"….I get what I am looking for"

"….access materials i need"

"….helps on research"

| *"….enabled me to do my research"* |
| *"….electronic services give very current information"* |
| *"….I get relevant books"* |
| *"….I get update reference materials"* |
| *"….availability of most of the books needed for my course"* |
| *"….the library gives a conducive environment for reading and also resources such as books are adequate"* |

The fore going statements indicated that users find the services useful because they get relevant information materials to satisfy their needs. On the other hand, when it was indicated that services were not very useful (poor), one participant lamented that:

"....photo copying services are very expensive"

In this case, inability to afford the photocopying services regarded it as poor.

In general, it can therefore be affirmed that MakLib provides useful services that satisfy users' needs.

The following comments were given to explain why staff Competence was perceived as either good or very good:

"….know and give out the right books"

"…. they have skills and knowledge required to provide the desired services"

"….know what they are expected of"

"….they do their work well and on time"

"…"most questions are well answered"

"….all the time there is someone to give service when you need it"

"….they work well, cooperate and understand the user's choice"

In the instance when the Competence of staff was perceived as poor, the comment indicated was that:

"….sometimes they can't direct students well".

Generally, Maklib staff are perceived as competent because they provide adequate services to library users.

The study also assessed the perceptions of users concerning MakLib in relation to other libraries. The most common libraries that participants indicated to have used and compared to MakLib included the National Library of Uganda, as well as some university libraries. Overall, almost all the participants indicated MakLib as better or superior to the other libraries. In comparison with other libraries, the following comments were noted:

"….Makerere does not limit use of computers as it is in public libraries"
"Makerere library services are better because of book loans and updated information
"….MAK library is better because it is organised and conducive"
"….better services compared to others"
"….Makerere has got big space compared to national library"
"….strict adherence to the rules and regulations"
"….MAK library is better stocked"
"….working hours are longer at Makerere library"
"….MakLib is a bit advanced than others"
"….Makerere library has the best services and equipment "

In regard to the environment, range of services and delivery, MakLib is perceived by users as more suitable compared to other libraries in Uganda. So, this can be interpreted that when a library focuses on quality service delivery and establishes a conducive environment, users will always rate it highly as evidenced by the findings discussed above.

4.3 Usage of Makerere library services
The study also aimed at establishing the Usage of Makerere library services. This was investigated basing on the services which the users sought or have been using.

Table 5 shows Usage of MakLib services

Services		Rate of Usage	
	Total	Number	Per cent
Reference services	94	50	53.2%
Book loan services	94	37	39.3%
Electronic services	94	29	30.9%
Document delivery services	94	3	3.2%
Library user training services	94	14	14.8%
Photocopying services	94	51	54.2%
Binding services	94	10	10.6%
Secretarial services	94	8	8.5%
Digitisation services	94	3	3.2%
Other services	94	5	5.3%

In table 5 above, "Rate of Usage" shows the number of participants who use a service. These findings show that the most used services include Photocopying services (54.2%), Reference services (53.2%), electronic services (30.9%) and Book loan services (39.3%). Regarding book loan services, the findings indicated a higher percentage (39.3%) compared to 8% of new Carnegie books Usage by the users who entered the library in a period of 10 days (Musoke & Mwesigwa, 2012) . The other services are not much used in the library, as indicated that only (14.8%) involve in library training service, binding services (10.6%), secretarial services (8.5%), and Document Delivery Services (3.2%), and Digitisation services (3.2%).

These findings clearly point out that there is disparity in use of services at Makerere University library, indicating under-usage of some services. This could mean that the majority of participants perceived the library as a place visited often primarily for photocopying, borrowing books, reading space, and using electronic services.

4.4 Users' suggestions to improve Makerere library services
The study also sought the suggestions of MakLib users on how to improve library services. In the first instance 80.6% of the participants when asked, "are there any services that need improvement" answered in affirmative. In what ways services could be improved, the following comments were common in the responses:

> *"….providing all services free to students for example bag storage"*
> *"….library user training to students should be routine"*
> *"….internet services should be improved, it is always slow"*
> *"….computer section at Distance and Education Library should be strengthened"*
> *"….stocking the library with more language books"*
> *"….more power sockets for laptop users"*
> *"….User education should be communicated better "*
> *"….wireless network should be functional on new computers"*
> *"….need to train new users about library services"*
> *" ….monitor car park with security"*
> *"….purchase more computers"*
> *"….subscribe to more journals"*
> *"….allowing students to borrow more than five books at once"*
> *"….increase number of staff at the reference section"*
> *"….provision of more computers in CCE library"*

These statements indicated that although users of MakLib perceive and regard it or rate it highly compared to other libraries in the country, they also realised the need to improve services provided. The improvement of the services should

consider stocking more books, computers and electronic services, as well as promote awareness of user education.

5. Summary, conclusions and recommendations

General marketing of the library raises its profile amongst users in the teaching and research units, and raises the visibility and awareness of what the library can do to support the colleges and schools/departments. This is a key component of demonstrating value. Identifying strategies to actively market the library to all its stakeholders could help garner their support. This would result in improved networking and communication between the library and those who use the library's resources and services.

Therefore, further promotion and marketing of library services using diverse approaches in order to enhance users' awareness and increase usage of all library services is highly recommended. The findings of the study point to the fact that there is need for MakLib to put more emphasis on promoting and marketing all the services that are offered, especially the least known to users such as Document Delivery Services, Digitization services, Secretarial services, Current Awareness Services, and Selective Dissemination of Information services. This could be done through planned public relation programmes, library weeks, study tours, user education programmes, library exhibitions, organisation of seminars, symposia and workshops, library awards night and librarians making contact with the faculty staff.

As recommended by Musoke & Mwesigwa (2012), continuous improvement of the end-user training programme needs to be engaged. Their study clearly informed that there was need to increase the number of regular End-user training programmes for the undergraduate users, in addition to the annual library freshmen's orientation programme. There should also be one-on-one attendance to the user queries and an "Ask the Librarian" desk. Library user training service is very crucial because it is the starting point to orient and introduce new users to available services, resources and facilities.

Adequate networked computers with fast Internet connectivity will help to improve on full text delivery of resources, easy access to electronic resources, and the use of search engines. This calls for increased procurement of such computers, which should mainly be located in the branch libraries that seemed to suffer from inadequacies.

More funding should be given to MakLib to establish and sustain an appropriate IT infrastructure. Since use of IT in Libraries helps in better organization of information and provision of information services in lesser time, MakLib should have fully computerized services and processes, and whatever the software used, it should be web enabled and allow interchange of data among different platforms.

In addition, it is important to note that libraries are a physical manifestation of the values of universities and scholarship. Therefore, further investment in libraries and in the professional development of librarians could be considered to ensure the university makes the greatest use of the potential offered by information and communication technologies. Raising the status and recognition of librarians and the value they add to the work of colleges and schools/departments could be beneficial for the university as a whole.

Finally, to raise the visibility of the library to senior managers, librarians should continue to address the promotion of advocacy of the library through encouraging strong relationships with senior managers, participation in joint research projects, and getting as many voices as possible 'at the top table'. This would help ensure that library's concerns and needs are echoed within university strategy documents.

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Interview schedule

Interview reference number…… Date………… Place……………….
Interviewer…………………… Interviewee…………………………...

Dear participant, this research is designed to collect information about users' awareness, perceptions and Usage of library services provided by Makerere University Library. You are kindly requested to respond to the questions asked openly and constructively. All information provided will be deemed confidential and used for academic purposes only.

Questions:
1. What category below best describes you as a Makerere Library user?
- Undergraduate
- Post graduate
- Teaching staff
- External user
- Other (Please specify)

2. How often do you use the library on average?
- Daily
- Three times a week
- Once a week
- Once a month
- Twice a month
- Other (please specify)

3. Which of the following services are you aware of in the Library?
- Reference services
- Book loan services
- Electronic services (OPAC, USDL, Journal Databases, and Library website)
- Document Delivery Services (DDS)
- Library User training services
- Photocopying services
- Binding services
- Secretarial services
- Digitisation services
- Others (List as many as you know)

4. Which of them have you used?
- Reference services
- Book loan services
- Electronic services(OPAC, USDL, Journal Databases, and Library website)
- Document Delivery Services (DDS)
- Library User training services

- Photocopying services
- Binding services
- Secretarial services
- Digitisation services
- Others (List as many as you have used)

5. What is your general perception about the above services you have used in terms of;

- Usefulness of the service to your academic work
- (i) (a)Very good (b) Good (c)Fair (d) Poor (e) Not sure
- (ii) Explain the choice of your answer (why that answers?)
- Sufficiency of the service
- (i) (a)Very good (b) Good (c)Fair (d) Poor (e) Not sure
- (ii) Explain the choice of your answer (why that answers?)
- Availability of staff
- (i) (a) Very good (b) Good (c)Fair (d) Poor (e) Not sure
- (ii) Explain the choice of your answer (why that answers?)
- Competence of staff
- (i) (a) Very good (b) Good (c)Fair (d) Poor (e) Not sure
- (ii) Explain the choice of your answer (why that answers?)
- Attitude of staff
- (i) (a) Very good (b) Good (c)Fair (d) Poor (e) Not sure
- (ii) Explain the choice of your answer (why that answers?)
- Any other comments about library services are welcome

6. (a) In your view, are there any services that need to be improved?

 (b) In what ways

7.   If you have used other libraries before, please indicate in general the extent to which

   MakLibservice is different from them.

- Type of library(ies) used before
- Comparison with MakLibservice

8. Generally, what is the awareness, perceptions and Usage of library services by other library users?