Chapter 10

The Future of Readership Development:
How ICTs Have Influenced User Habits and Library Acquisitions

Elisam Magara
Makerere University, Uganda

ABSTRACT

Libraries play an important role in development of human kind, especially in the development of reader-ship among the users. In particular, the development of ICTs has opened up new horizons for the creation, storage, access, distribution, and presentation that has significantly imparted and dramatically changed the fabric of the library user habits. It remains a challenge, however, to most of the libraries regarding which acquisitions models would be adequate for the user's needs. This chapter attempts to analyse the changing user habits and library acquisition trends and their contribution to the readership develop-ment within the ICT environments in developing countries. The chapter attempts to assess how academic libraries, with examples of Makerere University Library, have applied the library acquisition models to address the changing user habits and their implications. The chapter gives strategies for readership development to meet the socio-economic demands of the society.

INTRODUCTION

Libraries play an important role in the development of human kind. To utilise the use of such libraries within the organizational context, the selected and

acquisition of information resources have to be evaluated and negotiated for effective use. This is more so with the technological advancements that have opened up new horizons for the creation, storage, access, distribution and presentation of information. This makes the provision and use of Information and Communication Technologies

(ICTs) in academic libraries a critical issue that requires attention.

ICTs offer today's library users different opportunities compared to their predecessors. ICTs have enabled libraries to transform themselves into digital libraries. For instance, the potentials delivered by African Digital library have demonstrated that People in African region can access information on the Web (Tibenderana, 2004:243). The emergence of World Wide Web (WWW) is perhaps the greatest symbol of the shift in scholarly communication, the new role of management of library resources, the approaches to library acquisitions and to access of the library resources (Magara, 2002:241). This has seen libraries in a shift of storing, managing and using the electronic resources. Electronic resources open up the possibility of searching multiple resources at a time - a feat accomplished more easily than when using the printed equivalents. Electronic resources can be printed and searches can be saved so that they can be repeated at a later date. In addition, electronic resources are convenient to use as users are able to access information from the library; from Internet cafés; from their offices; and - at times - from the comfort of their own homes at any time of the day. Thus, the emerging role of ICTs, and in particular use of e-resources is significantly imparting and dramatically changing the fabric of the library user habits. This Chapter explores the challenges and opportunities of readership development within the ICT environments of the changing user habits and library acquisition trends. It attempts to:

- Explain the impact of ICTs on the changing user habits
- Analyse the various acquisition models for libraries
- Assess how academic libraries have integrated the above models to address the changing user habits and their implications

- Suggest a readership development model to meet the socio-economic demands of the society

THE CHANGING LIBRARY USER HABITS IN RESPONSE TO USE ICTs

The world is going the digital way that is influencing the way people use and/or read library resources. For instance, the concept of electronic book (more widely known as e-book) is changing the reading habits among the library users. A user in a library is a beneficially/patron/client of a library system. The user or potential user of information resource is the reason for the existence of any information delivery system. The duty of the library should be to help the re-transformation of library resources into thought that may lead to the creation of new thought. These duties are formulated into the 5 principles of library work as "books are for use, every reader his/[her] book, every book its reader, save the time of the reader an library is a growing organism" (Ranganathan, 1994:24). This implies that not all users and potential users should necessarily be lumped together as requiring exactly the same type of information. Internet in particular plays a crucial role in the access of information resources. Sources of information and other opportunities available via the Internet are increasing exponentially (Asemi, 2005). The steady increase in Internet use for education and research (Edwards & Bruce, 2002) and the development of searching tools has impacted on the user habits in an effort to search for knowledge. The library in terms of digital format consists of various electronic resources, such as electronic books, electronic journals, and electronic reports. These e-resources are available either in CD-ROM format, available online and those publications originally published in print or other formats converted into the digital format to be accessed on the Web (Asemi, 2005). Some of the web browsers include MSN, Netscape, and internet

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