2.13 Kenya

The Development of Academic Libraries and Information Services in Kenya

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Introduction

The history of academic libraries in Kenya dates back to the time when the first academic institution was established in Kenya. The inception of the University of Nairobi is traced back to 1956, with the establishment of the Royal Technical College that was later transformed into the second University College in East Africa on June 25, 1961 (University of Nairobi: 16). In 1970, the University College Nairobi was transformed into the first national university in Kenya and was renamed the University of Nairobi. Academic institutions have expanded since then, and today we have seven public universities, namely; the University of Nairobi, Moi University, Kenyatta University, Egerton University, Maseno University, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, and Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. There are over 20 private universities, over ten public constituent university colleges, four polytechnics and several Institutes of Science and Technology. All these academic institutions have academic libraries to serve the information needs of the institutions.

New and emerging technologies have taken root in Kenya. Kenyan universities have fully fledged departments in charge of ICT infrastructure, procurement and applications. The libraries have not been left behind in adapting to new and emerging technologies. Most libraries have automated their processes including acquisitions, cataloging and lending. E-mail communication has been adopted in libraries, and in all departments of universities.

Academic libraries cannot effectively prepare for the future or position themselves on campus until they understand their changing roles in the current learning and research environment, which is radically different from the environment a decade ago. There have been radical changes in the Kenyan higher education sector and which are expected to continue in the foreseeable future. These include a significant increase in student numbers, changes in student funding with a shift away from government funding to repayable loans and parental or self-sponsored contributions to fees, expansion of distance education, focus on teaching quality and the growth in the use of ICTs. There is no indication that private universities are financially deprived but they still face