

Evaluation of Africana, Periodicals and Special Collection Section of Egerton University Library, Njoro, Kenya

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Abstract

Africana, Periodicals and Special collection section of Egerton University Library provides information services directly to the users of the University library. The objectives of the investigation carried out during the months of August and September 2011 were to establish the extent of the use of the available informational resources, the subject area on which information was sought and the format of informational resources accessed. The study revealed that during the month of August 2011, postgraduates (52.83%) were the most users of the information resources while during the month of September undergraduates (79.6%) were the most users. Social sciences (23.72%), Education (33.06%) and agricultural (14.52%) subjects were heavily accessed. It was also established that Africana (52.64%) and Theses (33.92%) information resources were highly accessed. The possible reason why there was a variance in the use of the information resources was because the information was more applicable to the Kenyan situation. Among the most important recommendation was that Egerton University Library should develop a well coordinated periodical acquisition system that will lead to subscription of more relevant periodicals that meet the University's information needs.

Key words: Africana, Periodicals, Regular, Self Sponsored Programme, Theses

1. Introduction

Africana Periodicals and Special Collection Section (Africana) of Egerton University Library is a closed access section that houses information resources about Africa, authored by Africans and works done in Africa. There are materials that the Egerton University Library deems as special to well serve the users, and theses collection on works done by Egerton University staff and those by Egerton University alumni. Current print journals are available in the section under study. These valuable information resources are organized for easy retrieval (Crisp, 2003). The users of the section are researchers who have knowledge of the subject content of the information in need. The information resources are arranged by subject both in the catalog and on shelves. Egerton University has invested heavily in both human and information resources in the library which should add value to the institution. The study aimed to evaluate the use of information resources in Africana section within the Egerton university library and help the information managers improve on the services provided. The objectives of the investigation carried were to establish the extent of the use of the available informational resources, the subject area on which information was sought, the format of informational resources accessed and to suggest possible recommendations that can be adopted by the library to user information needs. This was based on a perception that that Africana periodicals and Special collection section of Egerton University was underutilized.

2. Methodology

The study was conducted in Africana Section, Egerton University Library Kenya. The participants in the study included users of the library composed of students, researchers, academic and non-academic staff from Egerton University, Kenya. Researchers from other higher learning institutions and research organizations who access the information resources in the section were also sampled. The study was conducted between the months of August and September 2011. Data was gathered using statistics register in which the users give details about the information resource accessed, the user himself and from request forms used to ascertain the location of the information resources. Data was presented in figures and tables and thematically analyzed (Kasomo, 2006).

3. Findings

The findings of this study are represented in Figure 1,2,3, 4,5,6 and Table 1

During the month of August, the regular undergraduates are on recess while Self Sponsored Programmes for undergraduate and postgraduate students are in session. The researcher observed that the postgraduate students (52.83%) were the most users of the information resources in the section during the month of August while others who included academic staff, non-teaching staff and other external users were the least (4.53%) as reflected in figure 1

4. Discussion

4.1 Level of study

The findings in figure 1 indicate that other users of Africana section contribute the least percentage of the total users. This is attributed to the fact that they are employees and are working in their offices during the day when the section is open. During the month of August the undergraduate Self Sponsored Programme (SSP) users have a busy schedule for their lectures hence cannot find time to access information resources. The postgraduate users (52.8%) could be as a result of the relevance and applicability of the available information to their research information needs.

Figure 2 indicates that during the month of September 2011 the undergraduates (79.6%) were the most users while others (0.77%) the least. This was as a result of the presence of undergraduate regular students who form a larger population of the University fraternity as reflected in the 2011 graduates where out of the total 2396, 121 (5%) were postgraduates (table 1). This indicates that a higher proportion of postgraduates used the Africana section.

4.2 Subjects sought when the University is on recess

Figure 3 indicates that Class L was the most accessed subject content (33.06%) because during the month of August, all the schools in Kenya are on holiday giving teachers opportunity to advance their studies. This also shows that majority of Self sponsored students at Egerton University are education oriented. Egerton University does not train lawyers and this explains why there were no clients who sought information on the subject (J- K). The researcher rated information sought on various subjects in relation to the ratio of graduates in May 2011 represented in table 1 against the percentage of information sought on various subjects represented in Figure 4

4.3 Information sought when the University is in session

From the findings represented in figure 4 and table 1, the researcher rated agriculture the highest sought subject (24.5%). This is because Egerton University is an agricultural institution while J-K was rated as least. Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) has a faculty library where the FASS based information seekers are served.

4.4 Format of information resources sought when the university is on recess

Figure 5 revealed that theses (60.1%) were the most used information resources in August 2011. This implies that theses are the backbone of research carried out in Egerton University where researchers want to compare their ongoing research with what has already been done and improve on them (Johnson and Rankin, 2006). The researchers are obliged to access the research findings carried out by Egerton University fraternity so as to develop the ongoing researches and become powerful partners with other researchers (Johns 2003). Periodical usage is captured at 1.63%, which implies that the periodicals may not be relevant to the information needs of Egerton University Library users.

4.5 Format of information resources used when the University is in session

In September 2011, the format of the materials accessed was contrast to August 2011 as represented in Figure 6. Figure 6 indicates that Africana resources (52.64%) were the most used information resources against Periodicals (0.66%) of the total users. The periodicals are either irrelevant or the users are not aware of the periodicals' titles available and their contents. The findings reveal that Africana resources are more applicable to the information needs of the researchers.

5. Conclusion

Throughout the study all the subjects were given equal treatment. The study revealed that when the University is on recess, the most users of Africana Section of Egerton University Library are the Postgraduate users in contrast to the undergraduates who are the majority users when the University is in session. The postgraduate library users are more interested in theses against the undergraduates who access Africana related materials. The study has also revealed that

when the University is on recess, Education related information is most sought while Agriculture related is sought when in session. Interestingly, Periodical usage is not popular amongst the information seekers.

6. Recommendations

- The University Library should liaise with academic departments to establish their information needs and endeavor to subscribe to more relevant periodicals.
- The available titles of periodicals should be made known to the users. This can be achieved through routing where a list of the titles can be sent to all potential users of every periodical.
- A user survey should be conducted to assess the relevance of the information sources in Africana against the information needs of Egerton University Library users' information needs to enable the library management make a decision on how well it can serve its users.

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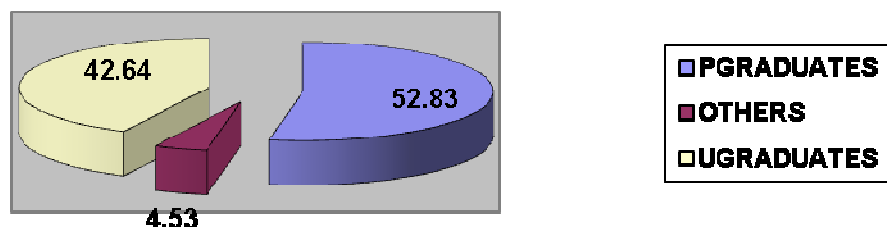


Figure 1. Number of Africana Section users by level of study in percentages during the month of August 2011.

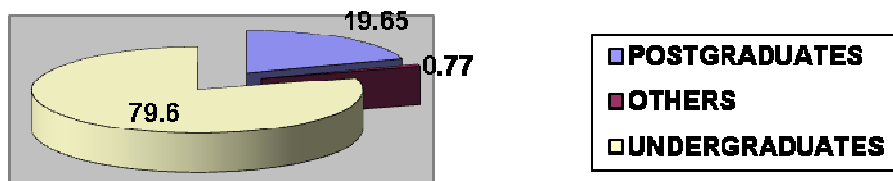


Figure 2 Users of Africana by level of study during the month of September 2011 in percentages

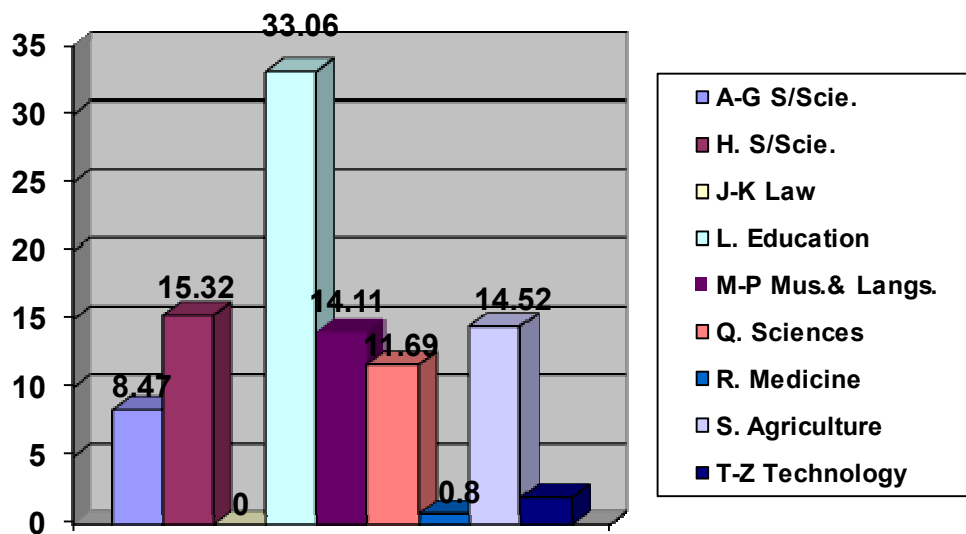


Figure 3. Information sought on different subjects during the month of August 2007 in percentages

Table 1: Number of Egerton University graduates in May 2011 by faculty

Agriculture	289
Education and Community Studies	266
FASS	248
Science	185
Engineering & Technology	51
FERD	43
Commerce	192
Health Sciences	111
COLD	140
IGWS	4

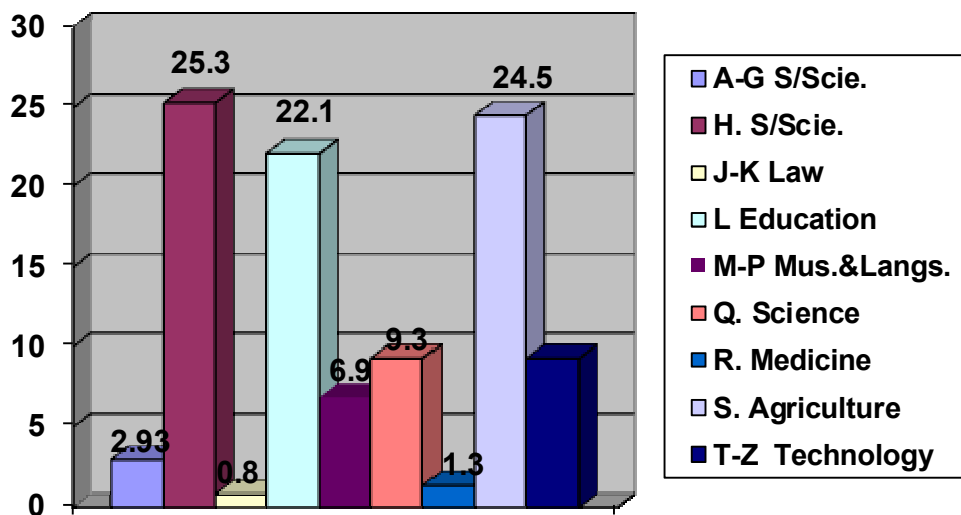


Figure 4. Information sought on different subjects during the month of September 2011



Figure 5. Categories of information resources used in Africana section in percentages during the month of August 2011

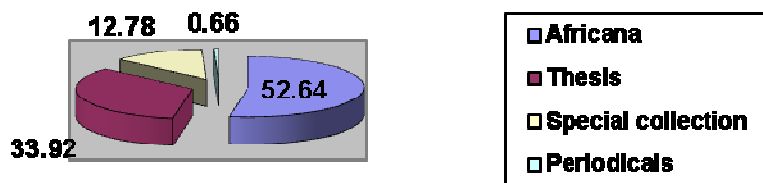


Figure 6. Categories of information resources used in Africana section in percentages during the month of September 2011

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