

# The Involvement of the Faculty in Book Selection: The Case of Egerton University Library, Kenya

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**Abstract** The study set out to find why users were unhappy with the library collection as was revealed by user surveys carried out by the library. The objectives of the study were to: Evaluate the usefulness of the collection; interrogate tools used by the faculty in book selection; find out whether the entire faculty are involved in book selection and make recommendations for future book selection. Borrower statistics were evaluated against books acquired two and a half years earlier. The study revealed that 43% of books selected over this period were unused. Recommendations for higher circulation include careful evaluation of books prior to acquisition.

**Keywords** Book selection, Collection development, Collection management, Library acquisitions, Collection building

## 1. Introduction

Egerton University was inaugurated as a University in 1985. It has continued to grow in student numbers as well as programs offered. To date it has over 38,000 resident and non-resident students spread across its four campuses and a full time faculty of 559 staff and 1400 non teaching staff. The library system has a total of 103,000 print books. The e-book collection is on the increase. The selection of e-resources (books and journals) is currently within the purview of librarians. The process of book selection is similar across the campus libraries. One of the authors of this paper has been directly involved in the book selection process at Egerton University Library.

Collection development in Egerton University involves various participants including the faculty in book selection, the library department in budget making and coordination of the book selection process, the university management in budgetary allocations, procurement department in facilitating the actual procurement, and book suppliers and publishers.

The Commission for University Education (CUE) has the oversight of university education in Kenya. The Commission's guidelines are gradually being implemented by different universities. The Commission has given university libraries mandate to provide for all academic programmes information resources that are varied, authoritative and up-to-date in order to effectively facilitate

teaching, learning, research and community service. It further emphasizes the critical role of the library in universities by demanding that each university management should fully integrate its respective libraries into academic world through building close partnership between the librarians and the teaching faculty. The Librarians are, therefore, being increasingly called upon by the stakeholders to assist users in evaluating and interpreting information in its various formats.

The guidelines given by the Commission include:

- Information resources need to be relevant and adequate in quality and quantity.
- The Library shall develop and implement a collection development policy which shall be reviewed within a period not exceeding five years.
- The Library shall subscribe and facilitate access and availability of electronic information resources.
- The Library Advisory Committee shall be responsible for collection development [1].

### 1.1. Collection Management

Collection management involves the oversight of current materials as well as planning for growth of the collection in the library while book selection is the heart of a good library collection [2]. The primary objective of library acquisitions is to meet the information needs of its users. It responds to user needs and therefore requires diligence in its management and implementation [3, 4]. The acquisition of information resources in Egerton University is primarily guided by recommendations made by the faculty, or the university administration; relevance to the curriculum; adequacy of current holdings; relevance to the social and cultural environment; ease of procurement; and the cost.

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In general, university library book acquisition policies are guided by the information needs of the university fraternity as recommended by the faculty as well as by other university stakeholders. According to Nixon and Saunders (2010), this is the ideal process to be followed. Patron Driven Acquisitions model (PDA) has gained popularity because of the inherent advantages it brings into the book acquisition process which include: user satisfaction combined with higher circulation and cost effective collection development as it not only leads to the acquisition of relevant titles but also in convenient formats and numbers.

## 2. Literature Review

Ranganathan (1989) formulated and expounded on the factors that guide the growth of libraries commonly known as the Five Laws of Library Science. These were: Books are for use; every reader his or her book; every book its reader; save the time of the reader; and the library is a growing organism. Ideally, a university library must have an acquisition policy to achieve a good and useful collection for its patrons as it continues to grow.

### 2.1. The Acquisition Policy

Academic libraries, in general, have a special responsibility to select, acquire and disseminate reading materials appropriate for study and research. This means that the library should have a well-defined acquisition policy, the character of which may, however, differ from institution to institution [18]. Librarians are advised against buying books that will not be read no matter the amount of money available or fair pricing of books. They should guard against reckless, irrelevant and wasteful expenditures. The only justification to buy a book must be that it will be read. Circulation of books is thus a parameter of measuring the value a collection has.

### 2.2. Usefulness of the Books Selected

Books that are never read, regardless of their quality, are not useful to the collection [5, 6]. As any university library seeks to provide adequate information resources to satisfy the needs of its clientele which includes the faculty, researchers, administrators and students of the particular institution, it should also ensure that there is an adequate collection appropriate for leisure and general reading as well as materials that reflect political, economic, religious, social and cultural issues. These must, however, be aligned to the mission of the parent institution. Sahai (2009) advised that adequate care should be taken to equip the library with properly selected books, journals and periodicals. The librarians are called upon to ensure that the balancing act of selecting books and other literary materials of different formats is judiciously made [7-9]. In addition to matching the diversity of the institution and the society as a whole, librarians are charged with the responsibility of

providing the patrons with resources that inform on the diversity of the nation specifically and the world in general despite limited budgets.

### 2.3. Tools for Book Selection

University library staff should maintain their traditional knowledge and skills and continue to perform their core functions as good professionals: by making users aware of information; offering users the best tools and techniques they can to access information; educating and assisting them in the use of these tools and techniques [17].

In determining books that may be relevant, librarians have always resorted to availing book selection tools to the faculty. Some university and college libraries have librarians responsible for selection in order to ensure that the continuity and balance of the collection is maintained while others are fully dependent on the faculty in book selection. Hence, for effective provision of a relevant collection it is important to have a functional procedure [7, 12]. Budgetary constraints demand understanding the collection use as the key to making informed decisions about resource allocation for collection development [8].

Appropriate book selection tools ensure that core materials that are heavily used and are required are available in terms of numbers and variety. Information materials that may not be as heavily used but are relevant should also be made available [10]. Henry et al. (2008) pointed out that subject areas lacking in book collections are likely to be better supported by online databases and journal collections and should be considered.

### 2.4. The Involvement of the Faculty in Book Selection

Nixon et al. (2010) reported higher rates of circulation of books requested for by the faculty. They, however, also observed that patron driven selection should accommodate all library users as opposed to limiting book selection to the faculty only. The guiding principle in selection of books, as suggested by [18], should be the teaching faculty as well as the students' natural and psychological interests.

In book selection, it has been observed that individual faculty members who are more vocal tend to be better represented in the collection because they order more often [11]. This category of faculty is also more often than not likely to exert pressure on the librarians to acquire books in their respective fields of interest. Certain areas of specialization have collections that are more frequently published such as the social sciences unlike the pure sciences.

## 3. Statement of the Problem

There are frequent complains on Egerton University Library's information resources being insufficient and irrelevant. It is however, worthwhile to note that these are common experiences by users of other university libraries all over the world. Issues such as insufficient and outdated

information and research materials are very common [12].

Situations where books are acquired and are not being used equally abound. The study, therefore, set out to investigate the possible reasons why library users are not contented with information resources selected by the faculty and subsequently acquired by the library.

### 3.1. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To evaluate the usefulness of the books selected to library users.
2. To establish the tools used by the faculty in book selection
3. To find out whether all the faculty are involved in book selection.
4. To make recommendations for future book selection.

### 3.2. Research Questions

The following are the research questions:

1. Is the faculty satisfied with the books selected in the University Library?
2. Which tools are used by the teaching faculty in book selection?
3. Are all teaching faculty in the University involved in book selection?

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Research Design

Descriptive survey research design was adopted by the study. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a survey is an attempt to collect data from members of a population in order to determine the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables. The researchers preferred a survey design as it aids in achieving the research objectives by facilitating to obtain information that describes existing phenomena.

### 4.2. Target Population

The target population for this study was all the 443 faculty staff of Egerton University, Main Campus. The researcher did not target other university members of staff because the university policy expects the librarians to identify and distribute book selection tools such as the publishers catalogues and book lists from booksellers to the teaching staff who are the only members of staff involved in book selection.

### 4.3. Sampling Technique

Stratified sampling was used to select respondents from Egerton University Faculties. The researchers used stratified sampling technique primarily to ensure that different groups of the total population are adequately represented in the sample so as to increase the level of

accuracy when estimating parameters [14]. Questionnaires were given to staff from the respective faculties as they came for information materials and services in the library, hence 100% responses.

### 4.4. Sample Size

Generally the sample size depends on factors such as the number of variables in the study, the type of research design, the method of data analysis and the size of accessible population [13]. The sample population is approximately 10% of the total population.

*"Gay suggests that for co relational research 30 cases or more are required; for descriptive studies 10% of the accessible population is enough and for experimental studies, at least 30 cases are required per group."* [13]

The researchers sampled 44 faculty staff from a total population of 443. This number of respondents is considered sufficient. The respondents are from 6 faculties and 1 (one) institute namely: Agriculture, Education and Community Studies, Engineering and Technology, Arts and Social Sciences, Environment and Resource Development, Science and the Institute of Women, Gender and Development Studies.

### 4.5. Construction of Research Instruments

The instrument used in this study is questionnaires. Nachmias and Nachmias (2005) observed that the foundation of all questionnaires is the question. The questionnaire must translate the research objectives into specific questions; answers to such questions will provide the required data to realize the objectives of the research. The questionnaires were designed to interrogate the faculties' understanding on book selection.

### 4.6. Data Quality Strategies

#### 4.6.1. Piloting and Pre-testing

The questionnaire was piloted to a selected sample that was approximately 24% of the sample size before the real study was undertaken to validate the questions and to gauge the type of responses that may be obtained from the respondents. This pre-testing of the questionnaires was done at Laikipia University Faculties. This enabled the researchers to identify errors that the research process and research instruments contained and corrections were made. Unclear instructions were rephrased.

#### 4.6.2. Validity

In order to guarantee validity the researcher(s) should provide enough clear questions for respondents. The final report of the findings should be as complete and candid as possible. The presentation should be characterized by a balance between the various aspects and by accuracy in writing [15]. For validity purpose, the researchers asked the right questions to the right respondents. The questionnaires were given to two Associate professors at Egerton

University to assess and advise the researchers on their validity. The questionnaires had been earlier pretested.

Johnson (2009) identified reasons for collection analysis to include:

- Understanding of the collection and its use to measure success.
- Developing and managing the collection effectively.
- Demonstrating accountability by showing progress towards performance goals.
- Demonstrating that investments are being used effectively.
- Providing detailed subject profile that can inform about the nature of the collection.
- Assisting in writing or in the revision of a collection development policy and in measuring an existing policy's effectiveness.
- To explain decisions and expenditures.

After respondents filled the questionnaires, the researchers collected and analysed them.

## 5. Results and Discussions

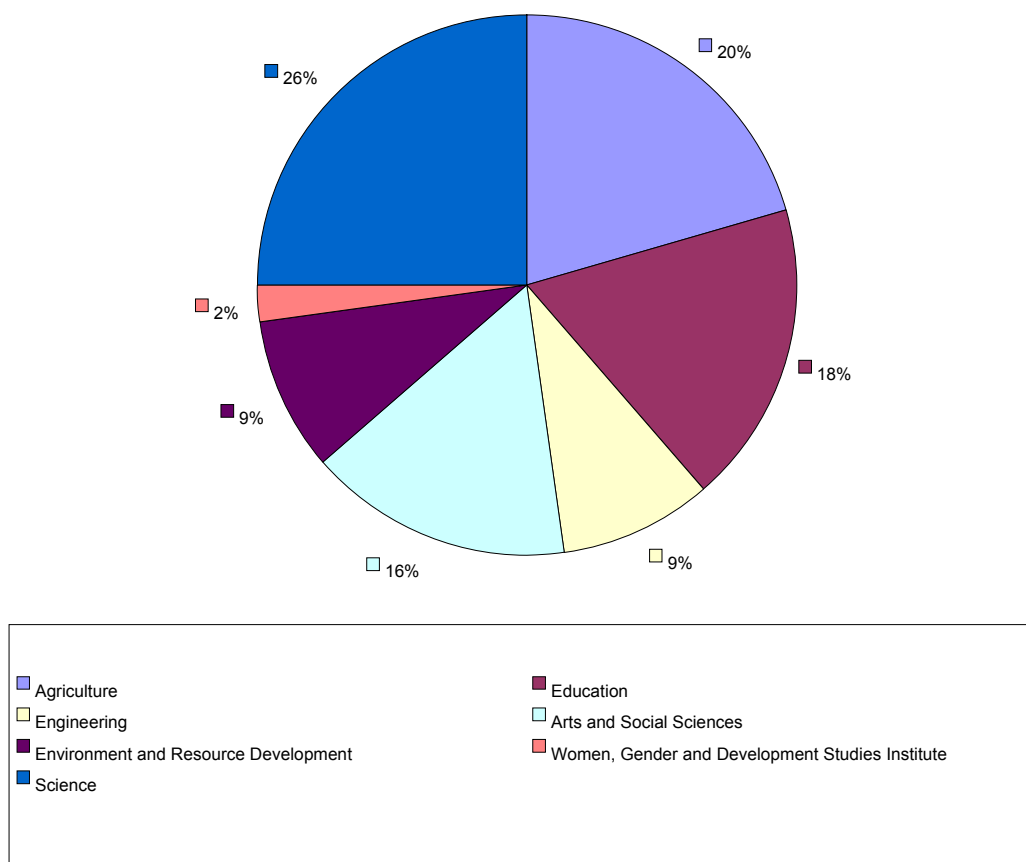
Table 1 above shows the faculties and their total staff,

number of sampled staff and the total number of staff involved in book selection.

**Table 1.** Academic staff in faculties interviewed in Egerton University

| Faculty/Institutes                              | Total No. of Staff | No. of Sampled Staff | No. Involved in Book Selection |
|---|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Agriculture                                     | 93                 | 9                    | 8                              |
| Education                                       | 77                 | 8                    | 5                              |
| Engineering                                     | 43                 | 4                    | 1                              |
| Arts and Social Sciences                        | 67                 | 7                    | 5                              |
| Environment and Resource Development            | 41                 | 4                    | 3                              |
| Women, Gender and Development Studies Institute | 8                  | 1                    | 1                              |
| Science   | 114                | 11                   | 5                              |
| Grand Total                                     | 443                | 44                   | 28                             |

Egerton University Main Campus has 7 faculties with 443 academic staff as shown on Table 1 (one) above. The Faculty of Agriculture has 93 academic staff, Education 77, Engineering 43, Arts and social sciences 67, Environment and Resource Development 41, Gender 8, and Science 114.



**Figure 1.** Percentage of sampled staff in the faculties

The researchers sampled 9 members of staff from the Faculty of Agriculture, 8 from Faculty of Education and 4 from Faculty of Engineering. Seven staffs were sampled from Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, 4 from Faculty of Environment and Resource Development, 1 from the Institute of Women, Gender and Development Studies while the Faculty of Science contributed 11 respondents.

Out of 298 titles selected by the Faculty of Agriculture staff, 156 were acquired, 112 were used by library patrons while 44 were not used. Staff from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences selected 361 titles, 285 of these were acquired, and 192 of the acquired titles were used while 93 were not used. Staff from the Faculty of Education and Community Studies selected 197 titles, 93 of these titles were acquired, and 48 were used while 45 were not used. From the Faculty of Engineering, 58 titles were selected, 18 acquired, 6 used and 12 not used.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of sampled staff in each faculty.

Staff from the Faculty of Environment and Resources Development selected 162 titles. Of these selected titles, 99 were acquired, 33 used while 66 were not used by library patrons.

Staff from the Faculty of science selected 150 titles, 40 of the titles were acquired, and 30 used while 10 were not used. Finally, the Women Gender and Development Studies Institute staff selected 68 titles and of these, 33 were acquired, 24 used while 9 were not used as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Titles Selected, Acquired, Used and Not used

| Faculty/Institute                     | Titles Selected | Titles Acquired | Titles Used | Titles Not Used |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Agriculture                           | 298             | 156             | 112         | 44              |
| Arts and Social Sciences              | 361             | 285             | 192         | 93              |
| Education and Community Studies       | 197             | 93              | 48          | 45              |
| Engineering and Technology            | 58              | 18              | 6           | 12              |
| Environment and Resources Development | 162             | 99              | 33          | 66              |
| Science                               | 150             | 40              | 30          | 10              |
| Women, Gender and Development Studies | 68              | 33              | 24          | 9               |
| Total                                 | 1294            | 724             | 445         | 279             |

Approximately 56% of the books selected by the faculty are acquired. The findings further reveals that approximately 39% of books acquired could not be verified to have been borrowed or used within the library.

Despite faculty involvement in book selection, when asked about the books in their respective areas of specialization, 38% of those involved in the selection

process expressed dissatisfaction with the collection pointing out that it was not relevant while 100% of respondents said that it was inadequate in terms of numbers.

The book selection tools that are in use include the internet, online book stores such as Amazon, other university libraries' collections, and publishers' catalogues.

Approximately 64% of the faculty participates in book selection. In some instances book selection has been left to faculty representatives as opposed to lecturers in their specific areas of expertise. Other reasons given for non involvement in book selection included majority of faculty staff not being part of the managerial team, availability of departmental/faculty representatives and lack of assurance that books will be bought due to limited funds.

The participation of the teaching staff in book selection was found to impact to some degree the level of books used versus not utilized.

Ultimately the emerging scenario is that, where selection was initially being done 'just in case' by librarians, it has now shifted and is being done by the faculty. Kuo (2000) noted that the expertise and cooperation of both the faculty and librarians is required in selecting appropriate materials and ensuring their use.

Some titles are selected with the expectation that they will be read and not because the content is relevant and well expressed. Clearly, this was not the intention of the proponents of Patron – Driven Acquisitions model.

Patron driven acquisition works well in acquisition of titles evidently required as demonstrated by requests made through inter-library loan or identified from bookstores [4]. These are titles that have been evaluated and certified as relevant as opposed to selecting titles randomly from publishers catalogues on the basis of assumed value of titles as is the case by the faculty in Egerton University.

## 6. Conclusions

The percentage of the number of books acquired at Egerton University and not used is quite high (39%) for a developing country. This is expensive in view of the fact that the library has a limited budget. This is symptomatic of a breakdown in communication between the faculty and the library and the library and the university management. The trio does not work with synergy to address concerns raised by the faculty and library staff. Books that are not being utilized are a liability to the library as once costs have been incurred in the procurement process further costs will be incurred in processing and making the books accessible to the users. Books acquired were additionally found to be inadequate in terms of numbers.

Some books are not used due to miss-shelving, crowded shelves, lack of understanding on how to use the Online Public Access Catalogue. Some information materials are irrelevant to patrons' information needs while others are out-dated.

The book selection tools in use include the internet, other

university library catalogues and publishers' catalogues.

Faculty involvement in book selection in some instances reflected mere formality and not all faculties responded when called upon to submit book orders. There is limited funding for public university libraries in Kenya. This inadequacy has been apportioned to the low priority accorded to the acquisition of new books as well as information communication facilities for libraries. Low funding has also led to waning interest in book selection from the faculty largely because requests take long to be delivered while others are never delivered.

## 7. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings:

Only books that are on high demand by library users should be selected and acquired for use. To further enhance accessibility and use of selected books, these should be always accurately shelved to ensure that titles can be easily located. The materials may be arranged in different collections depending on the target clientele. For example, core texts required by undergraduates may be separated from the rest of the collection and placed in a reserve section in order to enhance visibility and usage.

Distribution of book selection tools to the faculty is essential in aiding in book selection by the faculty. However, the faculty needs to be encouraged and facilitated to visit book sellers to identify relevant books for procurement. Books selected after careful physical examination tend to lead to higher circulation levels.

The library should develop a close working relationship with the faculty and university management. The faculty should select information materials in support of the courses and the research programs pursued in the university.

The university management needs to facilitate the acquisition of more selected information resources by increasing budgetary allocations to the library. This will ensure that there is more commitment in the selection process and that it is not a mere activity in the academic calendar. So far an average of 56% of book requests is acquired largely as a result of budgetary constraints.

The university should pursue best procurement practices to ensure that delays in procuring selected books are avoided. This will enable the acquisition librarian to acquire a broader coverage of books for courses taught and present justification for higher budgetary allocations to cater for shortages experienced.

Subject librarians need to be employed in the library. These cadre of staff need to have a university degree or post graduate qualification from a different fields in addition to having one in Library and Information Science.

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