

A review of citizen librarianship in academic libraries in Kenya

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Abstract

Citizen librarianship is the involvement of ordinary library users to create, review and share library services and content. Citizen librarianship emerged from the concept of citizen science in which non-experts are actively involved in and contribute to scientific research projects. The purpose of this chapter is to assess the understanding and extent of use of citizen librarianship in academic libraries in Kenya; identify the citizen media used in academic libraries in Kenya; analyse how the academic library users in Kenya interact with citizen media in their library spaces; examine the impact of citizen media on the effectiveness of academic libraries in Kenya; and propose a citizen librarianship model for academic libraries in Kenya. Primary data for the study on which this chapter is based was collected from the web sites of the libraries of all the chartered public and private universities in Kenya. Additional data was collected from key informant interviews with academic library directors and systems librarians in Kenya selected through information-oriented purposive sampling. The findings revealed that the majority of academic librarians in Kenya have never heard of the concepts of citizen science or citizen librarianship. Although citizen librarianship offers an important framework for users' involvement in meeting their own information needs and those of their peers through citizen media, its application in Kenyan academic libraries is low. The findings of this study may be used by academic librarians to adopt citizen librarianship in their institutions.

Keywords: *Citizen Librarianship, Citizen Science, Social Media, Citizen Media, Academic Libraries, Kenya*

1 Introduction

The concept of citizen librarianship entails the involvement of ordinary library users to create, review and share library services and content. Citizen librarianship emerged from the concept of citizen science. To be able to put citizen librarianship in context, it is important to first and foremost elaborate the concept of citizen science. Generally speaking, citizen science is perceived as a scholarly undertaking in which non-experts are actively involved in and contribute to scientific research projects. Although the term citizen science has been used in different situations to represent diverse scenarios, a key element of its definition is the participation of ordinary citizens in the scientific process together with professionals. Citizen science is currently viewed to be a modern concept but this is not entirely true because it started in the 19th Century when scientific investigations were carried out by scientists such as Charles Darwin in collaboration with amateurs. This collaboration played an important part in Darwin's contribution in biology especially in the area of natural selection.

There have been various discussions over what the concept citizen science should cover in terms of the scope and the discipline in which to domicile it. Irwin (1995) described citizen science as entailing the storage of knowledge within the non-scientific group. He described this as lay, local and traditional knowledge (LLTK). Bruce (2004) suggested a three-part definition of citizen science. The three parts of the definition are 1) the participation of non-scientists in the process of gathering data according to specific scientific protocols and in the process of using and interpreting that data; 2) the engagement of non-scientists in true decision-making about policy issues that have technical or scientific components; and 3) the engagement of research scientists in the democratic and policy process. Bruce's definition has been criticised that it has some overlap in the concepts of scientific research, scientific policy-making and science advocacy. A definition provided in the *Green Paper on Citizen Science* suggested that citizen science refers to the engagement of the general public in scientific research activities whereby citizens actively contribute to science either with their intellectual effort or surrounding knowledge or with their tools and resources. This definition has been perceived to be better and more inclusive. Other definitions of citizen science have been provided by many scholars. Some of these include the process whereby citizens are involved in science as researchers (Kruger & Shannon, 2000), a concept which is also referred to as community science (Carr, 2004); involvement of trained volunteers in scientific studies as field assistants who collect data (Cohn, 2008); and engaging ordinary citizens as scientist-volunteers to collect and/or process data as part of a scientific inquiry (Silvertown, 2009).

Lakshminarayanan (2007) asserts that true citizen science does not involve the conventional scientists using citizens merely as data collectors but rather engaging them as "citizen scientists". Crowston and Wiggins (2011) add that citizen science is a form of research collaboration in which professional scientists engage with members of the public to

accomplish scientific research goals. Citizen science is also often seen as a part of a wider trend of crowd-sourced science or “collaboratories” where a large network of people collaborates after an open call for contribution (Crowston & Wiggins, 2011). The concept of citizen science has gained popularity and become a sort of movement. Its growing popularity has attracted attention to its definition. Consequently, its definition has progressively become polished and simplified. In recognition of its place in common lexicon, *Oxford English Dictionary* officially included a definition of the term in its June 2014 update. The dictionary defines it as scientific work undertaken by members of the general public, often in collaboration with or under the direction of professional scientists and scientific institutions.

Citizen engagement in scientific and technological projects has been widely seen as providing opportunities for education and communication to reduce the remaining distance between laypeople and science (Gray, Nicosia & Jordan, 2012; Powell & Colin, 2008). It is an effective method of promoting formal and informal science education and public understanding of science. It is counted as a win-win situation where citizens are given an opportunity to contribute to the scientific research projects designed by professional researchers. Prevailing interpretations consider that through their participation, citizens increase their interest in scientific learning (Riesch & Potter, 2014) while contributing to the development of projects of scientists (Silvertown, 2009). Bucheler and Sieg (2011) suggest that the performance of citizen science projects may be increased by turning crowds of individuals into swarms of teams based on collective intelligence and variety of backgrounds.

The benefits accrued from citizen science projects greatly vary. One benefit is the expansion of the sampling efforts in scientific projects. Projects that involve citizens often continue over longer periods and have a larger scale and scope than professional scientists could typically achieve alone (Bishop 2014) because of the short-term nature of scientific research funding. There are some research projects that could provide a clearer understanding of a certain scientific question but requires a lot of funding or skills that scientists require. Involving citizens in such projects enables the teams to collect large data sets with minimal funding. Bollen *et al.* (2014) proposed collective decision making and pooling of research funds driven by algorithms and mathematical models which would, in their opinion, drastically reduce the current high costs of both peer review of research proposals and the time the scientific community spends on writing them instead of researching. Citizen science also has the potential to positively change attitudes towards science. The inclusivity in citizen science can break down that perceived distance in science. Citizen science makes science possible for everyone irrespective of personal, geographical or socio-economic background. Citizen science also creates awareness of scientific issues leading to improved skills. Citizen science results in enhanced efficiency, transparency and reliability. Open access to scientific outputs enhances the transparency and reproducibility of the scientific process (Ioannidis, 2005). This controls scientific fraud since other researchers get an opportunity to replicate or test the data and mine the articles content (Murray-Rust, 2008). In the past, impact factor and peer review have been seen as the measure for outputs for quality research but in the future more open methods and faster feedback is becoming popular as a result of citizen science.

Despite the great potential that citizen science has in making positive impacts on science research and the general public, there are challenges associated with it. The challenges emanate from the kind of the project or the characteristics of the data. One of the most obvious challenges is the varied skill level of the citizen science participants that leads to disparities among data points. For instance, as projects are scaled up, there is concern about the rigor and usability of data collected by citizens who are not formally trained in research science. This can be minimised by leading researchers providing clear directions and expectations to the participants. Feedback mechanism is also important just in case there are questions or there is need for troubleshooting. This can be done in the projects’ websites and usually includes the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). There can also be step-by-step training guides. As the project increases in size, the steps of coordination and uniformity become crucial for the usability of the data. There is another challenge of effective communication. The participants may fail to have the big picture or full understanding of the scope and limitations of the research project. Ethical research issues should be communicated, especially, when it touches on research on humans. Another challenge relates to the difficulty of articulating the outcomes of citizen science because of the current lack of capacity for evaluation within the citizen science field (Jordan *et al.*, 2012; Phillips *et al.*, 2012). As the field of citizen science grows and matures, improved strategies and evaluation tools will ensure the desired objectives are achieved. Lastly, it is argued that the greatest strength in citizen science also acts as its greatest weakness. The fact that the science research is not purely done by the experts may lead some to question the validity of the data or even the value of the project in promoting scientific progress. These issues can be addressed by training the citizen scientists properly. As citizen science continues to become part of the science research landscape, it is important to continue refining its best practices.

2 Literature Review

As explained earlier, citizen librarianship is the involvement of ordinary library users to create, review and share library services and content. Citizen librarianship entails the use of citizen (social) media to facilitate ordinary library users

to perform roles which were conventionally reserved for librarians. The concept is emerging through the realisation that citizens themselves can play a role in determining the flow of credible information, which is the foundation of librarianship (Brandtzaeg & Luder, 2008). Citizen librarianship is paralleled with citizen journalism which entails the participation of lay people in collecting, organising and disseminating media content through social media. Ockerbloom (2007) explains that citizen librarianship has been practised for long since different people within and without library organisations have participated in library activities such as collecting, describing, organising, making accessible, helping people find and use, and preserving diverse information resources alongside professional librarians. However, he points out that with the emergence of the social media, it has become easier for people to work as citizen librarians using digital media and technologies.

According to Ockerbloom (2007), citizen librarians stretch the library services beyond the library walls to communities who would have hitherto not been reached easily. He explains that citizen librarians are able to give more customised services and collections than professional librarians can because of their presence in the communities. He emphasises that although there is room for creativity, citizen librarians should be willing to adopt and apply best practices which have been developed by libraries throughout the years. This view reinforces the principles of Library 2.0 which emphasise user-centred approaches in designing and delivering library services. Thus, progressive libraries are expected to facilitate their users to create and share content; enhance the presence of the users in the library environment through socially-rich activities; solicit and guarantee the involvement of users in changing their libraries and not vice versa (Kwanya *et al.*, 2013). Miller (2006) recommended that libraries should focus less on secured inventory systems which are selected and managed largely by the librarians but more on collaborative discovery systems which are designed or selected and managed by both librarians and users in a mutually beneficial partnership.

Ockerbloom (2007) clarifies that not everyone active on social media can be a librarian. He explains that people who are willing to adopt principled methods for collecting, describing, and disseminating information resources as a service for their communities can be facilitated to act as citizen librarians. Kwanya *et al.* (2013) proposed that librarians can strengthen the capacity of the library users to contribute effectively in the conceptualisation and delivery of information services through comprehensive information literacy services going beyond library orientations. Kibe and Kwanya (2015) suggest that librarians can work with library volunteers to promote and deliver library services and products to their peers. Describing such volunteers as knowledge ambassadors, Kibe and Kwanya (2015) explain that using them can increase the usage of library resources as well as deepen user participation in the design, development and deployment of library services and products. Similar benefits are highlighted by Cho (2008) who points out that an active and empowered library user is a significant component of progressive library environments. He stresses that with information and ideas flowing in both directions –from the library to the user and from the user to the library – library services offered in a participative library environment have the ability to evolve and improve on a constant and rapid basis. Thus, the user becomes an active participant, co-creator, builder and consultant of library services and products.

Citizen librarianship can be a strategy of enhancing the usefulness and relevance of libraries at a time that many potential library users are actively seeking alternative sources of information. In this context, citizen librarianship can be used as a means of increasing the participation of users in designing and delivering library services. It can provide a framework for democratising the library and in a way create a library for the people and by the people. Such a library is likely to meet the unique needs of most, if not all, members of the communities they serve in a better way than traditional libraries. Kwanya *et al.* (2013) explain that many libraries find it difficult to meet all the needs of all their users. This is largely because of resource constraints. So, libraries essentially focus on providing services or resources needed by the majority of the users thereby ignoring the needs of the minority. Kwanya (2011) suggests that libraries can meet the unique needs of users by promoting self-service. This way, the library users and their peers collaborate with the librarians to create, collect or share resources needed by minority users. This approach is not only effective but is also cost-friendly. Therefore, citizen librarianship has the potential of enabling libraries to meet the needs of their peripheral users by collaborating with them in identifying and satisfying those needs.

Ockerbloom (2007) explains that citizen libraries have the potential of opening library resources to virtually everyone (open access libraries) using social media and other digital networks thereby enlightening the world, making it easier for people to collectively create and share knowledge, enabling diverse forms of production and commerce; enabling the community to add to information resources by contributing content in print, digital and multimedia formats; facilitating extensive and effective sharing of library resources and products such as content, metadata and infrastructure as a cost-sharing mechanism aimed to reduce the expenses associated with library operations. Recognising the growing prominence of calls for freedom of information as well as information rights, embracing a service model which espouses user participation is one of the strategies which stand a chance of enhancing compliance with legislative and policy requirements of libraries especially those funded using public resources.

According to Das (2014), citizen librarianship may be realised through remodelling the use of library spaces to draw the participation of citizens in helping to deliver the library mandate. He emphasises that in the context of public libraries,

it is easier to involve communities by ensuring the library is a true “people’s university”. For instance, he proposes that libraries can create spaces in which communities as citizen librarians can experiment with artefacts, equipment and software. Thus, the library space may be used by ordinary citizens to learn, share and create knowledge as citizen librarians. He emphasises that the citizen librarian is an empowered group of people who are not only consumers but are also creators and disseminators of knowledge. For this to work effectively, he emphasises that library spaces should be reconfigured around broader education and research needs and less around the management of typical collections.

3 Rationale and methodology of study

Literature on citizen librarianship is limited. The authors hardly found any comprehensive scholarly work on the subject. This is perhaps an indication of low interest on the participation of citizens in designing and delivering library services. Blyberg (2006) as well as Kwanya (2011) argued that whereas librarians may be willing to cede or share control over some of their services, they are reluctant to open up others like cataloguing and knowledge organisation processes. It is also possible that the apparent lack of literature on the subject is a pointer to a silent resistance to the realisation of its ideals. Since citizen librarianship is anchored on the principle of collaboration and reduction of controls, professional librarians may be reluctant to embrace it because it will reduce their power over information. Kwanya *et al.* (2014) pointed out that most librarians are comfortable acting as the bridges between their patrons and the information they need. They act as intermediaries thereby acting as gatekeepers to information and information resources. The modern library users, on the other hand, prefer disintermediation as a means of removing barriers to library services and products (Kwanya *et al.*, 2012).

Since the reasons for the lacklustre presence of information on citizen librarianship is unclear, it is not possible to assess its suitability or otherwise to library communities. Academic and research libraries are some of the most liberal library typologies. The liberal principle is derived from the spirit of academic freedom which universities espouse (Kwanya, 2011). Therefore, academic and research libraries have the greatest potential to embrace citizen librarianship. The purpose of this study is to contribute to the efforts of promoting citizen librarianship by drawing the attention of librarians to it. Specifically, this chapter assesses the understanding and extent of use of citizen librarianship in academic libraries in Kenya; identifies the citizen media used in academic libraries in Kenya; analyses how the academic library users in Kenya interact with citizen media in their library spaces; examines the impact of citizen media on the effectiveness of academic libraries in Kenya; and proposes a citizen librarianship model for academic libraries in Kenya.

Primary data on the citizen media used by academic libraries, how they are used as well as the impact of their use was collected from the web sites of the libraries of all the 49 chartered public and private universities in Kenya. Data on the perception and understanding of citizen librarianship and its application in academic libraries in Kenya was collected through key informant interviews with 25 academic library directors and systems librarians in the 49 chartered universities Kenya selected through information-oriented purposive sampling.

4 Findings and discussions

The authors purposed to interview 25 academic library directors and systems librarians in academic libraries in Kenya. However, only 19 were successfully interviewed representing a response rate of 76 per cent. The majority (58.8%) had never heard of the concept of citizen science. These findings confirm that the concept is new to most of the academic librarians in Kenya. The authors observed that whereas the number of librarians in Kenya who are unaware of citizen science may be higher than in other countries, the concept is generally new to librarians globally. For instance, Pors (2010) reported that the concept was implemented in libraries in Denmark from 2007. Goulding (2009) also insinuates that citizen science was introduced in libraries in the United Kingdom around the year 2007. Recognising the fact that the two cases date more than ten years ago, the situation in Kenya should create great concern for librarians in the country.

4.1 Understanding of the concept of citizen science among academic librarians in Kenya

Asked to explain their understanding of citizen science, those who reported to have heard of the concept described it as shown hereunder:

“Research by members of the general public under supervision of professional researchers”

“This is a relationship between citizens, science and the technology”

“It refers to the participation of the public (lay people) in scientific research”

“Citizen Science is the collection and analysis of data relating to natural things happening in the world”

“This is the use of social media to acquire and gain information and knowledge”

These findings indicate that the respondents who had come across the concept generally understood what it is. Considered together, they define citizen science as an approach which entails an active involvement of lay people in

scientific activities under the supervision of professional scientists. The definitions also identify social media as one of the important sets of tools used to facilitate the participation of lay people in science. It is also evident from the definitions that citizen science involves scientists developing a relationship with the citizens. This emphasis is important because not all citizens can participate in all scientific studies. Therefore, scientists need to identify and cultivate a relationship with citizens who have the potential to contribute effectively to scientific endeavour.

4.2 Understanding of the concept of citizen librarianship among academic librarians in Kenya

Asked whether they were familiar with the concept of citizen librarianship, the majority (52.9%) answered in the affirmative. It is noteworthy that this number is less than those who had not heard of citizen science. This finding implies that some (5.9%) of the librarians know about citizen librarianship but do not understand that it is actually anchored on citizen science. An understanding of the principles and characteristics of citizen science are important for libraries deploying citizen librarianship. The authors encourage librarians to explore citizen science as a means of contextualising their citizen librarianship projects.

Those who were familiar with citizen librarianship defined it as follows:

“Use of common social media platforms to satisfy ever increasing users’ needs”

“Blogging”

“Application of technology in librarianship”

“It is a scenario where ordinary people support librarianship by giving feedback on issues and providing relevant information”

“It is the use of social media to communicate on information on library”

“The practice by non-professional librarians to create, organise and distribute content to serve the needs of a particular community. It may also mean the same practice done in a non-conventional way to serve the needs of a given user group or groups”

These definitions emphasise the participation of non-librarians in supporting libraries to perform their core functions. It involves the participation of lay people, such as library users, in collecting, organising and sharing information. Again, the role of social media and related technologies is evident in the definitions. The authors conclude that citizen librarianship is indeed the application of the concept of citizen science to the library environment largely through social media technologies.

4.3 Extent of use of citizen librarianship in academic libraries in Kenya

The respondents were asked to name academic libraries they know which use citizen librarianship. Five (5) of the respondents explained that they did not know any academic libraries in Kenya using citizen librarianship while six (6) did not know whether or not any academic libraries in Kenya are applying the concept. This implies that the majority (58%) of the respondents were unaware of the use of citizen librarianship by academic libraries in Kenya. Some of the academic libraries identified to be using citizen librarianship include United States International University (USIU), University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University, Pwani University, Kabarak University, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, the Technical University of Kenya, South Eastern Kenya University, Cooperative University of Kenya, and Kenya Highlands University.

When asked to explain how they knew the cited academic libraries are using citizen science, they said that the university libraries used different types of social media. According to them the use of social media was an adequate evidence of the application of the philosophy of citizen librarianship. An analysis of the web sites of the 49 chartered universities in Kenya revealed that 38 of them have social media accounts while 11 have no social media sites. This indicates that the majority (78%) of the university libraries have social media presence.

4.4 Social media used by academic libraries in Kenya

Of all the social media used, Facebook emerged as the most popular at 27% followed closely by Twitter at 24%. It was surprising to come across applications such as Pinterest and Flickr, which are associated more with images. A few institutions indicated they had Whatsapp accounts as well. However, it was not easy to test if they were indeed being used and to what extent. Figure 1 presents the social media used by academic libraries in Kenya as revealed by an analysis of their official web sites.

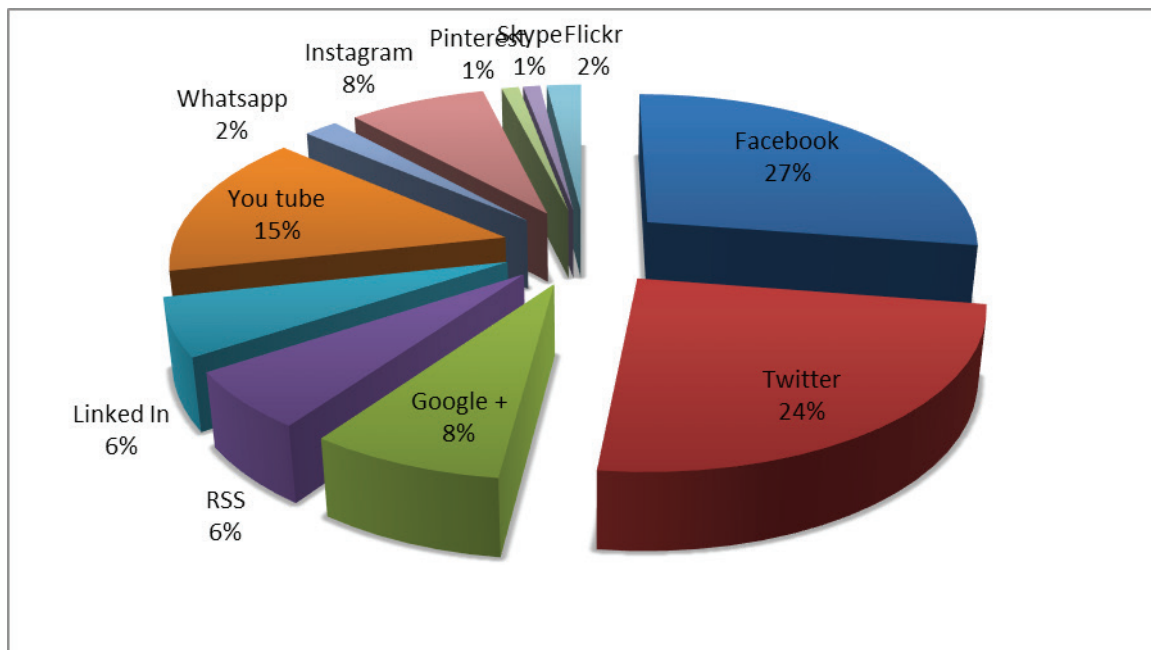


Figure 1: Social media used by academic libraries in Kenya

Source: Research Data

Individual libraries have attempted to create their own social media sites. However, these were limited, with only 4 Facebook accounts, 3 on Twitter, and 1 each on RSS, Linked-In and Google+. Kenyatta University was found to have the most active social media sites linked to their library. At the time of the analysis, the sites had been recently updated giving an indication that posting is done regularly, with the less used sites such as YouTube, Google+ registering very old posts. This, however, could be attributed to the fact that they are more useful with posting videos and photos of major functions such as graduations which take place only once in a while or just annually as would be case with graduation ceremonies. It was, however, noted that the majority of the posts were from the university administration and the students commenting on the posts. The students hardly initiated any posts and there were very few shares on Facebook or re-tweets on Twitter. The likes registered were at a minimum of 1,500 and a maximum of over 151,000 with a matching number of followers. Four (4) institutions gave the indications that they had the social media sites but upon clicking on the links they were either dead links or they pointed to totally different web sites.

4.5 Impact of citizen librarianship on academic libraries in Kenya

When asked to assess the impact of citizen librarianship on the service delivery by academic libraries in Kenya, the respondents stated as reported verbatim hereunder:

“Brings the user near to the library”

“Reaching many users remotely”

“Not very much of an impact since many people are yet to adopt it fully”

“It helps library to collect and make important information accessible to users”

“It increases awareness of all library materials to the library patrons”

“The impact is minimal. The social media is mostly used for marketing and awareness purposes. It however has potential impact owing to the high number of millennial patrons using the library services”

On the importance of citizen librarianship to the effective delivery of academic library services, the majority (54.3%) of the respondents held the view that it is either of high or very high importance; 31.3 per cent said it is of moderate importance, while 12.5 per cent said it is of low importance. Asked to suggest ways academic libraries in Kenya may enhance the use of citizen librarianship, the respondents provided the suggestions reported hereunder verbatim.

“Publicise it during library orientation or using posters”

“Market the social media”

“Encourage constant communication through these media”

“Create awareness and orientation to new staff and students”

“Sensitise staff members on the relevance of using social media to collect feedback”

“Let the libraries understand the concept of citizen librarianship and how effectively they can utilise it”

“Introduce the use of social media, assigning staff the sole responsibility of getting what users are saying and responding to their concerns; ensure users are encouraged to use it without fear of victimisation”

“By having active content managers who have the passion and time to add value to online information services; improving on the platforms used. For example, Facebook may not be good enough for content management. A blog or wiki may be a better option”

The suggestions above revolve around improving the use of citizen media in the libraries. Another suggestion is on creating awareness about the value of citizen media for the delivery of information services in academic libraries in Kenya. Citizen media originally emerged as platforms for social networking and were not perceived as critical tools for scholarly communication. It is now evident that scholarly communication is really about conceptualising, conducting and reporting research projects. Social networking and interactions play a pivotal role in this process. The other suggestions are reported verbatim hereunder.

“Reference librarians should take charge of and respond to users’ queries in a timely and accurate manner”

“Assign specific library staff to interact with and handle social media aspects”

“Engage with users and build communities through strategic social media”

“Improve the overall infrastructure to support optimal use of social media”

“The social media selected for citizen librarianship should be active all the time and should contain relevant information about services offered and any new development”

“Draw clear policies on service delivery and create awareness on the same among librarians”

“Provide a platform for reliable feedback by users which can be used by libraries to improve on their services. Citizen media provide platforms where constructive discussions can be held by a wide variety of people from all over”

“Conduct workshops and seminars through KLISC [national library consortia] and let academic librarians be aware of the value of using citizen media for service delivery”

“Use citizen media to communicate to the library patrons about new arrivals, both print and electronic media”

“Citizen media can be used in announcing new titles, disseminating relevant information, implementing good suggestions provided by users; information literacy purposes (topical content, guides, etc.); disseminating grey literature; conducting user surveys and providing feedback of the same; and supplementing the institution’s web site, for example, by providing links on the web site and providing content that cannot be covered by the web site alone”.

4.6 Citizen librarianship framework for academic libraries in Kenya

To benefit effectively from citizen librarianship, academic libraries in Kenya should consider taking the following actions:

1. Understand the principal tenets of citizen science and its association with citizen librarianship. They should also appreciate the role of user participation towards the realisation of effective service delivery in academic libraries. This can be achieved through structured workshops and training on the topic. A good understanding of citizen science is an important determinant of an effective conceptualisation of citizen librarianship.
2. Conduct a survey of the existing and emerging citizen media and identify those that have a high potential of application in academic libraries. Knowing that citizen media emerge rapidly, the librarians are encouraged to develop and apply appropriate selection criteria to identify the media which are suitable to their contexts. The criteria could include the features, usability, associated costs, and popularity amongst the community of users, among other issues.
3. Develop a comprehensive citizen librarianship strategy for academic libraries. The strategy should include an analysis of the linkage between the overall corporate strategy of the parent institution, the library’s strategic plan as well as the proposed citizen librarianship. It should spell out the aims and objectives of using citizen librarianship as well as how to realise them through detailed work plans and allocation of resources.
4. Create a position in the library for a citizen librarian. The holder of the position should be responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the citizen librarianship strategy and plans. The officer should have a combination of ICT and public relations skills. Libraries which are not able to hire officers dedicated to this function should redeploy existing staff accordingly to cover it. In either case, appropriate training should be offered to the new or redeployed officer to be able to handle the tasks of the new office.
5. Develop a citizen media policy stipulating the rights and obligations of the parent institution, librarians and user community. The policy should provide guidance on ethical considerations and implications of using citizen media to deliver information services in academic libraries. It should also guarantee the library users of their safety in digital citizen spaces within and outside the physical library.
6. Implement citizen librarianship strategy incrementally according to the approved work plans. This should be done

while also assessing the performance and/or suitability of the strategy. Academic libraries are encouraged to make any adjustments to both the strategy and work plans as they deem fit. However, they are cautioned to give ample space for implementation before making drastic changes.

5 Conclusion

Citizen librarianship is a new phenomenon in the academic library context. However, it is an essential development meant to buttress user-centric approaches to the design and deployment of information services in academic libraries. In Kenya, it is a recent entrant to the academic library arena. No wonder the majority of the librarians have never heard of it or its anchoring concept of citizen science. Those who have heard of the concept are able to explain it as the involvement of lay people in delivering paraprofessional services. In academic libraries, patrons are no longer considered as mere users but as partners in the conceptualisation and deployment of information services. Indeed, the respondents asserted that citizen librarianship is of great importance to the realisation of effective service delivery in academic libraries in Kenya. Therefore, citizen librarianship offers an important framework for users' involvement in meeting their own information needs and those of their peers through citizen media. The findings of this study may be used by academic librarians to adopt citizen librarianship in their institutions.

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