THE USE AND IMPACT OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ON MALAWIAN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: A CASE STUDY OF MZUZU UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

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Abstract

Tertiary institutions are centres of learning and knowledge generation. It is important therefore that libraries which are hubs of learning and which stock most of information in the institutions of higher learning should have Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) which will aid in the processing, accessing and dissemination of information in this information age. The study aimed at exploring the level of ICT application in Malawian academic libraries focusing on Mzuzu University Library. Specifically, the study was carried out to: determine level of application and use of ICT in Mzuzu University Library; determine the relevance of ICT in Mzuzu University Library establish how skillful and knowledgeable the staff are in the use of ICT resources, and to determine the factors that affect the use of ICTs in Mzuzu University Library. Data were collected by ta means of a questionnaire which was administered to 18 library staff of which 16 responded. The study reveals that Mzuzu University Library is computerized/ automated and that it uses KOHA software. Most of its vital services: reader services division, reference services, technical services, acquisition and cataloguing are computerized. Most of the ICTs are available in the Library. The most common ICTs in the Library are: Internet, OPAC, desktop computers, online databases, CD-ROM, and duplicating machines; and that the library personnel mostly use Internet, online databases and OPAC. The Library personnel has very good skills for using these ICTs. These ICTs are relevant to the Library because it offers several benefits for example, conserving space in the Library, speeding up cataloguing and classification in the library, removing repetitive tasks and impacting on charging and discharging of books in the Library; and that the ICTs are being used for several purposes of using the ICTs in the Library by the library staff include to acquire information, to communicate with colleagues, to process information, to store information, to access library collection and to disseminate information. Despite the relevance if ICTs to Mzuzu University Library, there are several factors that are affecting the application and use of these ICTs. The main factors include inadequate funding, epileptic power supply and lack of ICT skills that would help in using the ICTs. Hopefully, the results will also help in making improvements.

Keywords: Information and Communications Technologies, academic libraries, Mzuzu University, Malawi