

THE
ANVIL

AMERICAN GREGG SHORTHAND

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At Premier College,
Biashara Street. Telephone 22272.

Vol. 9

No. 71

MONDAY, APRIL 6, 1981

PRICE 1/-

OPINION

The construction of a new ultra-modern library on this campus is a most welcome step because a library occupies an important place in the academic life of both students and staff. It is the major store of knowledge and reference.

But the present main campus library has left a lot to be desired in this regard. First there is not enough reading space and in fact it was operating beyond capacity.

This has resulted in a situation which is embarrassing to our academic life. Just prior to exams, the jostling and hustling that goes on as students try to get a place in the library normally ends into a pandemonium that sometimes leaves a few hurt.

It reminds one of matatu stage scene during rush hours more than the dignified place a university should be.

And one can imagine the frustration a student experiences when after all the jostling, there is no sitting place for him or her in the library. Since most of the important references can only be used in the library, lack of sitting space certainly affects the students reading programmes and may result in shoddy academic performance.

More important the university, is regarded as the leading disseminator of knowledge by virtue of it being the highest institution of learning. For this reason many "wananchi" are often making attempts to enroll as members of our library.

But due to the limited space available, not everybody who wants to use the library facilities, is able to do so. We hope this situation will change when the new library opens so that the university can continue to help the wananchi in their efforts to combat ignorance by furthering their knowledge.

Despite these positive pointers to the future, it is worrying that the library lacks enough qualified personnel due to lack of training funds. When are the authorities going to have a coherent training programme for our library staff?

Memorial Library gets off the ground

Construction of the shs. 80 million Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library has started. The area behind Hyslop and Education buildings has become a scene of beehive activity. Workmen are to be seen felling down the giant eucalyptus trees and excavating the site.

When completed, the new library will give students both enough reading and breathing space. The four storeyed building will have capacity to have one million books and a seating capacity for 1330 readers.

The present main library can only hold 300,000 books and was designed for 250 readers only. But due to increased student population it had to be modified to accommodate 480 readers which means less space for the readers.

Talking to THE ANVIL, the Chief Librarian, Mr. J. Ndegwa said the memorial library will be quite ultra-modern and the biggest in East Africa.

It will have a computerised and automated system of issuing books which will save the librarians and the readers the tedious process of writing and checking cards.

Explaining the computerised system, Mr. Ndegwa said the reader will have his library card with a given number and other relevant details. The books will also have a card with a specific number. When it comes to borrowing both all the librarian will have to do is feed to a machine which will electronically record the borrowers card details on the book's card and then stamp it.

This information then will be stored in the computer. When the reader returns the book the same process will be repeated but this time the computer will decode its records and indicate that the book has been returned.

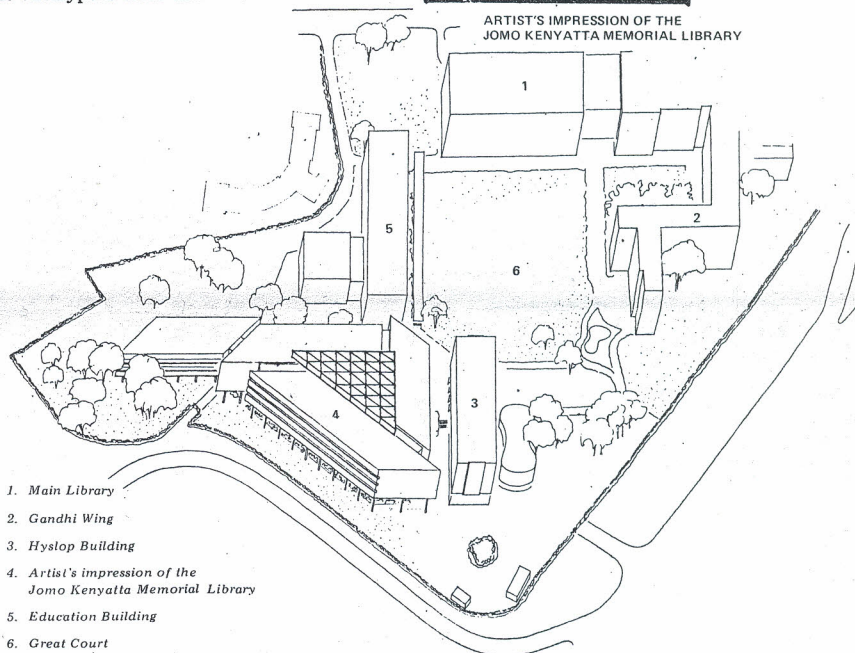
If the book is overdue there will be no escaping. The computer will have already brought out a list of the overdue books and the librarian will be well informed of the culprits.

More important, the computer will record the number of times a book is borrowed. This, Mr. Ndegwa said, "will help us to know the most popular books so that we can increase the number of copies."

For those who have been lifting books from the library, their days are numbered and will come to end when the new library opens.

The library will again have a computerised foolproof security

BY WAMAHIU MUYA



This is how the main campus will look after the completion of the Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library.

By courtesy of MUTISO MENEZES INTERNATIONAL

system. There will no more security man to fool this time. Mr. Ndegwa said the new system will operate in such manner that if anyone tries to get away with a book that is not properly issued he or she will be caught.

It will consist of an electronic device and the exit will be something like what we have now at the main library. But if someone attempts to get away with a book which is not recorded by the electronic machine properly, the exit will lock itself automatically and sound an alarm and the detector will be apprehended on the spot.

This automation, Mr. Ndegwa noted, will not in anyway throw some library staff out their jobs. Rather, he observed, it will make it possible to deploy them to more interesting technical work.

"Right now we are faced with a shortage of professional staff and this automation will release some of them to do more advanced work", he said.



The chief librarian, Mr. J. Ndegwa, the new library will be computerised and automated.

Shortage of staff, Mr. Ndegwa said has been caused by lack of enough training funds. The library has been relying heavily on British assistance to train the graduate staff but with the cut down on education assistance by the British conservative government not much

has-been coming from that quarter.

The university takes its staff for training to the Kenya Polytechnic but like many other public institutions it has been faced with a brain drain as staff flee for greener pastures in the private sector.

On future developments, Mr. Ndegwa said, will see more and more computerisation of the library services. The library will work to establish computerised "banks of information".

Through this system researchers and other interested parties will be able to know where to get information they want without going through the jungle of catalogues.

The library will work to establish direct contacts with other banks of information so that it will be possible to get information on any subject directly at our library. Construction is expected to start in June, after the site is excavated and fully cleared. And the library is expected to be ready for use by early 1983.