

ABSTRACT

This paper outlines the library situation in Kenya. There are about three hundred institutional libraries ranging from small documentation centers with stock of less than five hundred volumes to large establishments with a stock of over one hundred thousand volumes. Different categories of libraries include public libraries, special libraries, academic libraries and diplomatic missions libraries (public/special).

Due to the escalating book and periodical costs, Kenyan libraries have found it difficult to maintain periodical subscriptions and have any money left to purchase books. This has in some cases led to some libraries not being able to meet their users' needs. This situation has necessitated cooperation among different libraries so that the few resources available can be shared and utilized economically.

Interlending has inevitably played a major role although practiced very informally on a gentleman's agreement procedure. There is need to have a focal point which can formalize and streamline the interlending activity in Kenya, taking all the security precautions needed and ensuring that the items borrowed are delivered fast enough and returned on time to the lending library. Such a focal point would also have a union catalogue of what is available in most libraries thereby making searching easier for the users.

Problems such as poor transport and communications, rigid rules and regulations, lack of photocopying equipment, copyright laws, etc., are highlighted as having made it difficult to transact the interlending activity. Some solutions to these problems are also described.