THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY AND THE NEEDS OF THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY:
A study of library services in the Queen's University of Belfast and the New University of Ulster.

by

JOHNSTON LIKOKHE ABUKUTSA
Fellow of the Library Association

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Johnston L. Abukutsa
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ABSTRACT

The library is central to the effectiveness of an academic institution. This proposition is usually accepted in principle but is rarely fully applied. Effectiveness must be assessed by reference to the needs, expressed and unexpressed, of the community of users. These needs and the use of libraries have been investigated in British universities, e.g., Leeds, Southampton and Durham. These enquiries have shown that:

a) Most users regard immediate availability of material as crucial - delay amounts to failure;

b) Readers tend to go straight to the shelves for books rather than use catalogues first;

c) Consumer research in the library provides a sound basis for assessing library performance.

Investigations at the Queen's University of Belfast and the New University of Ulster show that:

i) Effective deployment and use of staff and efficiency of service are significantly affected by the geographical distribution of service points and the degree of decentralization in administration;

ii) Undergraduate collections fulfil an obviously useful function but do not provide the student with a sufficiently comprehensive stock or adequate service;

iii) Arrangements for staffing, administration and use of departmental libraries are such that it is not possible to achieve high standards of service;
iv) Factors of internal library environment have a significant influence on users. Improvement and development of library services are dependent on the two universities providing more money for the purpose. Book selection and instruction in library use at N.U.U. involve close co-operation between academic and library staff, but these operations and reader services are less well organised and co-ordinated at Q.U.B.