

This issue contains seven research articles on a variety of topics, and two general contributions. The first article, by Mary Nassimbeni and Snoeks Desmond, presents the results of a research project which investigated the effects of the provision of story books in twenty disadvantaged primary schools in rural South Africa. The recipients of the donation were children in deprived areas, growing up in print-poor environments. A qualitative approach was adopted to collect data before the intervention, and six months after the book donation which included a comprehensive training programme in the use of the books. Their conclusions and recommendations are very instructive. Among other things, they recommend that innovation in teaching approaches associated with the use of books should be accompanied by careful training, and benign monitoring.

Sandy Zinn and Natasha Langdown turn our attention to the use of e-books amongst academic librarians in South Africa. They found that e-books were used for “browsing for information” and were selected for functionalities such as having the ability to search the document, anytime access and automatic citation. The major impediments to the use of e-books were the cost of the equipment to read e-book formats; the cost of the e-books, especially if the subscription purchasing model was used; the lack of reliability of the Internet; and the lack of training in how to use e-books.

Issues of quality management and service delivery remain central to the information environment of the information society. Beatrice Odera-Kwach and Patrick Ngulube discuss the results of a study that aimed at identifying the performance measurements used for the evaluation of quality in Kenyan university libraries, with the aim of determining the perceptions of university librarians towards performance measurement. The study established that the majority of the university librarians considered some performance indicators important. The study concludes by recommending the use of nine performance criteria and 26 indicators for the evaluation of the quality of university libraries. Turning to service delivery, Mduduzi Aubrey Ntetha and Bertha Jantine Mostert investigated whether the availability of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in government offices within the boundaries of uMhlatuze Municipality in South Africa improved their ability to deliver effective e-services. The major findings suggest that various ICTs were available and were used by the staff, but not necessarily for service delivery. Lack of computers and Internet access was identified as a major challenge. The study also found that there is an urgent need for basic training on all the ICT tools available in the offices. They recommended that a resource and capacity survey should be conducted in all the offices to identify shortcomings in the system in order to improve service delivery.

Ezra Ondari-Okemwa touches on a subject that has dominated the knowledge economy. He discusses the strategic importance of identifying intangible assets for creating value and enhancing competitiveness and innovation in science and technology in a knowledge economy with particular reference to the sub-Saharan Africa region. The article underscores the strategic importance of identifying intangible assets in sub-Saharan Africa; examines the performance of intangible assets in a knowledge economy; shows how intangible assets may generate competitiveness, economic growth and innovation; and assesses how knowledge workers are becoming a dominant factor in the knowledge economy. It was recommended that organizations and government departments in sub-Saharan Africa should implement a system of the reporting of the value of intangible organizational assets identical to the reporting of the value of tangible assets; and that organizations in sub-Saharan Africa should use knowledge to produce “smart products and services” which command premium prices.

The next two research articles present results from informetric studies. Omwoyo Bosire Onyancha highlights salient patterns of post-graduate research in information and knowledge management (I&KM) in Library and Information Science/Studies schools in South Africa. The study found that there is an increased interest in I&KM by post-graduate students in South Africa. The main topics of research are related to Library and Information Science (LIS) and Business Science; the majority of the study leaders belong to the discipline of LIS; and the most productive institutions are universities. The second study, by Leslie Adriaanse and Chris Rensleigh discusses a macro- and micro-level comparison of the citation resources Web of Science (WOS), Scopus and Google Scholar (GS) for the environmental sciences scholarly journals in South Africa during 2004-2008. The study established that GS is not yet a substitute but rather a supplementary citation resource for the fee-based WOS and/or Scopus for the South African international accredited scholarly environmental sciences journals during the period 2004-2008.

Two general communications on African researchers' contribution to informetric literature, and challenges faced by postgraduate researchers, conclude this issue. Isola Ajiferuke provides evidence that the contributions of African researchers to the informetrics literature are minimal. The three main challenges identified as limiting the contributions of African scholars to the informetrics literature were lack of appropriate skills, inadequate data collection sources, and unaffordable analytical tools. To overcome these challenges, it was suggested that regular pre-conference workshops on informetrics be organized, an African Citation Index be developed, and the use of free analytical tools be encouraged. On the other hand, Stephen Mutula discusses the challenges faced by postgraduate researchers in developing countries. Some of the challenges identified were low throughput, declining government subsidies, inadequate research capacity, inadequately prepared students for postgraduate programmes, inconsistent postgraduate research guidelines, stringent statutory research permit requirements, bureaucracy in the admission process, slow thesis examination processes, poor supervision, balancing between occupation and academic work, inadequate facilities, and heavy teaching loads. Because of these challenges, while not peculiar to Africa, the continent lags behind the developed world in making discernible progress in addressing them.

Enjoy the read  
Prof Patrick Ngulube  
Editor-in-Chief