

RE-THINKING CHANGING ROLES OF ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH LIBRARIANS IN TANZANIA: REFLECTIONS PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Academic and research libraries are central hearts of universities and their survival depends on their ability to satisfy the information needs and demands of users from a wide range of disciplines. This paper argues that information and communication technologies have brought about profound and unprecedented changes in the way information is accessed, stored, retrieved and delivered. However, in view of this, the role played by librarians must change from mere custodians to educators, facilitators, synthesisers of user information needs and trainers of trainers. The paper also argues that despite the benefit potentials of new information and communications technologies, libraries will continue to focus on their traditional roles, which are collection preservation and dissemination, but, what will and must change are the techniques used in ensuring effective use of library resources in both print and non print forms. This also requires integrating information technology and library resources to support teaching, learning and research and access to information. This demands that librarians be resourceful, forward looking and plan strategically to ensure effective use of library resources and IT facilities. Finally, it stresses that librarians must play a leading role in setting library policy directions and priorities in their institutions in order to achieve organisational change, improve performance and efficiency and in order to sustain their key objectives, which pertain to selection, organization and preservation of knowledge and ensure its access. The paper also stresses that resource mobilization, training and retraining of staff and users is crucial in order to enjoy the benefits of new technologies.