

ABSTRACT

This exploratory study was carried out in Nairobi County, Kenya to investigate the role of private university libraries in supporting eResearch. The study used a multiple-case study design involving six private chartered universities that included Africa International University, Africa Nazarene University, the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Daystar University, Pan Africa Christian University, and the United States International University. The following research questions were addressed: How do the organisation structures of the university libraries support eResearch? What positions in the organisation structure and competencies are available for coordinating eResearch? How is curation, analysis, and provenance (Metadata) of both basic data and information produced by research achieved? What problems of data management, organisation, dissemination, and preservation exist and how can they be addressed? What procedures, tools, and policies are used to promote eResearch? What is the inclination of library and academic staff towards eResearch? The study was underpinned by two theoretical frameworks namely: The Purdue University Libraries (PUL) model and the eResearch Capability Model (eRCM) respectively. A pragmatic paradigm was adopted, which provided a basis for the use of mixed methods encompassing qualitative and quantitative approaches. The unit of analysis consisted of PhD students, Faculty, University Librarians, Reference Librarians, and Institutional Repository Managers. PhD students and Faculty are the most active group in research in the universities. Librarians on the other hand, are involved in providing eResearch support. Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect data from 306 PhD students, 462 Faculty members, 13 Reference Librarians, and 7 IR Managers, while interviews were used to collect data from the University Librarians. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 21 to generate descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data were analysed using content analysis. Validity was enhanced through deriving questions from the set objectives, reviewing and adopting methodologies from previous studies and application of a multiple-case design to enhance generalisability of the results. Reliability was ascertained through pre-testing of the survey questionnaires and subjecting it to Cronbach's Alpha where a coefficient Alpha of 0.895 was achieved indicating a high reliability. The study complied with research ethical protocols of the UKZN and permission was sought and granted from all the universities that were surveyed. Consent was also obtained from respondents prior to involving them in the study. The findings of the study showed that the university libraries had stringent organisational structures, conventional library set ups, and lacked roles specifically designated to facilitate eResearch support. The findings also revealed that the libraries generally did not have staff with competencies to provide eResearch support. Therefore, research data management service was not provided by the university libraries. Several challenges in relation to data management were identified which included the lack of strategies and policies to guide data management support, the lack of integrated and realigned eResearch policies, the research process was fragmented, meaningful collaborative support towards eResearch within the universities and externally had not been established, and there were limited ICT policies and infrastructures. Finally, the findings revealed a general positive attitude and willingness towards eResearch from the librarians and the researchers at large but the eResearch environment was yet to be institutionalised. The study proffers among other recommendations a review of the libraries' organisational structures to facilitate eResearch; an advancement of librarians' competencies through formal and informal structures to empower them to effectively support eResearch; libraries should assist researchers to create data management plans; there is a need for libraries to institutionalise RDM as a core library service; there is a need for an elaborate ICT policy to ensure appropriate tools are available to enable eResearch; the need to create awareness and

advocacy about eResearch among stakeholders, and the libraries must carry out needs analysis to understand the stakeholders needs properly in order to create a conducive environment for eResearch.