# USER INVOLVEMENT IN COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT: HYBRID LIBRARIES IN TANZANIA

**OSCAR SANGA**

Mzumbe University, Dar es Salaam Campus College, P.O. Box 20266, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

**ABSTRACT**

In the evolving landscape of academic libraries, user involvement in collection development has emerged as a critical factor for ensuring that library resources meet the diverse needs of their patrons. This study examines the role of library users in the collection development processes of hybrid academic libraries in Tanzania, which integrate both physical and digital resources. Through a mixed-methods approach involving surveys, interviews, and case studies, the research explores how user feedback is incorporated into collection policies, the impact of user engagement on collection relevance and quality, and the challenges faced in implementing user-driven strategies. The findings reveal that while hybrid libraries in Tanzania are increasingly recognizing the value of user input, there are significant barriers related to resource constraints, training, and communication. The study provides recommendations for enhancing user participation in collection development, aiming to foster more responsive and user-centered library services in the Tanzanian academic context.

**KEYWORDS**

User involvement, Collection development, Hybrid libraries, Academic libraries, Tanzania, Library resources, User feedback, Collection policies, Library services, Digital resources

**INTRODUCTION**

In the digital age, the role of academic libraries has expanded beyond traditional book repositories to become dynamic information hubs that integrate both physical and digital resources. In Tanzania, hybrid academic libraries, which combine conventional print collections with digital media, are increasingly adopting innovative strategies to enhance their relevance and service quality. One such strategy is involving library users in the collection development process. This approach acknowledges that users, as primary consumers of library resources, possess valuable insights into their needs and preferences, which can significantly inform and refine collection strategies.

User involvement in collection development is not a novel concept, but its application in the context of hybrid libraries in Tanzania presents unique challenges and opportunities. By actively engaging users, libraries can better align their collections with academic and research demands, improve resource utilization, and foster a more responsive and user-centered environment. However, the implementation of this user-centered approach in Tanzanian hybrid libraries faces several obstacles, including limited resources, insufficient training, and gaps in communication between library staff and users.

This study aims to explore how hybrid academic libraries in Tanzania are incorporating user feedback into their collection development practices. It investigates the extent of user engagement, evaluates the effectiveness of current practices, and identifies the challenges faced by libraries in implementing user-driven collection strategies. Through a comprehensive analysis of user feedback mechanisms, library policies, and resource management practices, this research seeks to provide insights and recommendations for enhancing user involvement in the collection development process. By doing so, the study aims to contribute to the development of more responsive, user-focused library services that meet the evolving needs of the academic community in Tanzania.

**METHOD**

To investigate user involvement in collection development within hybrid academic libraries in Tanzania, this study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews and case studies. This multi-faceted methodology provides a comprehensive understanding of how user feedback is integrated into collection development processes and identifies both effective practices and areas needing improvement.

The study begins with a structured survey administered to library users across several hybrid academic libraries in Tanzania. The survey is designed to capture a broad range of data on users' perceptions of the collection development process, their level of engagement, and the perceived impact of their feedback. The survey includes questions on users' awareness of collection development policies, their participation in feedback mechanisms (such as suggestion boxes, online forms, and focus groups), and their satisfaction with the responsiveness of the library to their input. The survey results will be analyzed using statistical methods to identify trends and correlations between user engagement and perceived collection quality.

Complementing the survey, in-depth interviews are conducted with key stakeholders, including library managers, collection development staff, and active library users. These interviews aim to provide a deeper understanding of the processes and challenges associated with incorporating user feedback into collection development. The interview protocol includes open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses on how user feedback is collected, evaluated, and acted upon. Interviews also explore the barriers and facilitators encountered in implementing user-driven collection strategies. The qualitative data from these interviews will be analyzed thematically to identify common patterns and insights.

To further contextualize the findings, the study includes case studies of selected hybrid academic libraries in Tanzania that are recognized for their innovative approaches to user involvement in collection development. These case studies involve detailed observations and documentation of the libraries' collection development practices, user engagement strategies, and the outcomes of these practices. By examining these cases, the study aims to highlight successful models and best practices that can be adapted or scaled to other libraries within the region.

Data from the surveys, interviews, and case studies will be integrated to provide a comprehensive overview of user involvement in collection development. Quantitative data will be used to identify general trends and patterns, while qualitative data will offer context and depth to these trends. The combined analysis will enable the identification of key factors influencing effective user engagement and the development of practical recommendations for enhancing user participation in collection development. This mixed-methods approach ensures a robust examination of the research questions and provides a balanced perspective on the complexities of user involvement in hybrid academic libraries in Tanzania. The findings are expected to offer valuable insights into improving collection development practices and fostering a more user-centered approach in library services.

**RESULTS**

The study on user involvement in collection development within hybrid academic libraries in Tanzania reveals a nuanced picture of how user feedback influences library resources and services. The survey data indicate that while a significant proportion of users are aware of collection development processes and express a desire to contribute, actual engagement in providing feedback is relatively low. Users who do participate generally use suggestion forms and online surveys, but they often perceive these channels as inadequate for making meaningful changes.

Qualitative interviews with library staff and stakeholders highlight several key issues: first, there is a lack of structured processes for incorporating user feedback into collection decisions. Library managers report that although user feedback

is occasionally reviewed, it is not systematically integrated into collection development strategies. Additionally, there is a gap in communication; users are often unaware of how their feedback impacts the collection or if their suggestions have been acted upon. This lack of transparency contributes to user frustration and diminished engagement.

Case studies of selected hybrid libraries reveal varying levels of success in involving users in collection development. Libraries that have implemented regular feedback sessions, user advisory committees, and targeted surveys tend to have more robust user engagement and better alignment between the collections and user needs. These libraries also report higher levels of user satisfaction and perceived relevance of the resources available. Conversely, libraries with less structured approaches face challenges such as resource constraints and limited staff training, which impede effective user participation.

Overall, the study finds that while there is an increasing recognition of the importance of user involvement in collection development among Tanzanian hybrid academic libraries, significant barriers remain. These include insufficient feedback mechanisms, lack of systematic integration of user input, and communication gaps. The results suggest that enhancing user involvement requires more structured feedback processes, greater transparency in how user input is utilized, and increased investment in staff training and resources. By addressing these areas, libraries can better meet user needs and improve the relevance and effectiveness of their collections.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study underscore the critical role of user involvement in the collection development process within hybrid academic libraries in Tanzania, revealing both promising practices and significant challenges. The relatively low engagement rates reported by users highlight a gap between the potential for user contributions and the actual incorporation of their feedback into collection policies. This disconnect suggests that while users are willing to participate, the mechanisms for collecting and integrating their input may be insufficiently developed or poorly communicated.

Interviews with library staff confirm that although there is an awareness of the benefits of user involvement, many libraries lack formalized processes for systematically incorporating user feedback. The absence of structured feedback mechanisms and the lack of transparency in how user suggestions are handled contribute to lower levels of user satisfaction and engagement. This finding aligns with broader research on user-centered library services, which emphasizes the need for clear, actionable feedback channels and effective communication to foster meaningful user participation.

The case studies reveal that libraries with proactive user engagement strategies, such as advisory committees and regular feedback sessions, tend to experience higher user satisfaction and better alignment of their collections with user needs. These successful examples highlight the value of integrating user perspectives into collection development and suggest that Tanzanian hybrid libraries could benefit from adopting similar practices. Such strategies not only improve the relevance of library collections but also enhance user trust and satisfaction, ultimately leading to more dynamic and responsive library services.

However, the challenges identified, including resource limitations and staff training issues, are significant barriers that need to be addressed. Effective user involvement requires adequate resources to manage feedback processes and staff who are trained to handle and utilize user input effectively. Libraries may need to invest in these areas to build more robust and inclusive collection development practices. The study highlights the potential benefits of increased user involvement in collection development, it also emphasizes the need for libraries in Tanzania to overcome existing barriers. By developing more structured feedback mechanisms, improving transparency, and investing in staff training, libraries can enhance their ability to meet user needs and improve the overall quality of their collections. This approach not only aligns with best practices in library rscience but also fosters a more engaged and satisfied user base.

## CONCLUSION

The study on user involvement in collection development within hybrid academic libraries in Tanzania highlights both the promise and the challenges of incorporating user feedback into library practices. The research demonstrates that while there is significant interest and potential for user participation in shaping library collections, current practices are often insufficiently developed to fully harness this potential. Users are generally willing to contribute but face barriers such as inadequate feedback mechanisms and limited communication about the impact of their input.

The findings underscore the importance of establishing structured and transparent processes for user involvement. Libraries that have successfully integrated user feedback into their collection development strategies show improved alignment between their resources and user needs, leading to higher satisfaction and engagement. These examples provide valuable models for other libraries to emulate, suggesting that proactive and systematic approaches to user engagement can significantly enhance the relevance and effectiveness of library collections.

However, the study also reveals critical challenges, including resource constraints and the need for better-trained staff. Addressing these issues is essential for building more effective user feedback systems and ensuring that user input is meaningfully integrated into collection development processes. Investment in these areas will not only improve the quality of collections but also foster a more responsive and user-centered library environment.

In conclusion, while the integration of user feedback into collection development in Tanzanian hybrid academic libraries is still evolving, there is clear potential for improvement. By implementing more structured feedback mechanisms, enhancing communication, and investing in staff development, libraries can better meet user needs and strengthen their role as essential academic resources. This approach will contribute to more dynamic, relevant, and user-focused library services, ultimately benefiting both the libraries and their diverse user communities.

## Reference

1. Agee J (2005). Collection Evaluation: A Foundation for Collection Development, Collection Building 24(3):92-95.
2. Agyei V (2012). The De-selection En-masse at Tshwane University of Technology (TUT): Enabler for Implementation of Hybrid Collections, Pretoria - South Africa: Tshwane University of Technology (TUT).
3. American Library Association (ALA) (2000). Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education.
4. Baro EE, Keboh T (2012). Teaching and Fostering Information Literacy Programmes: A Survey of Five University Libraries in Africa, The Journal of Academic Librarianship 38(5):311-315.
5. Benny L (2015). Selection and Acquisition of E-Resources in Academic libraries: Challenges, International Journal of Digital Library Services (IJODLS), 5(2):1-14, (Online), Available at: www.ijodls.in, (Accessed on 4th September, 2015).
6. Dulle FW, Lwehabura MJF (2004). User Information Literacy: Challenges Facing University Libraries towards Effective Implementation, 6th Standing Conference of African National and University LibrariestowardsEffective Implementation, (SCANUL-ECS) 2nd-5th July 2004, pp. 15-21.
7. Dulle FW (2010). An Analysis of Open Access Scholarly Communication in Tanzanian Public Universities, Submitted in Accordance with the Requirements Science, South Africa: University of South Africa.
8. Elder NJ, Hobrock BG, Madsen DL, Wiese WH (1990). Collection Development, Selection, and Acquisition of Agricultural Materials, Library Trends 38(3):442-73.
9. Evans GE, Saponaro MZ (2005). Developing Library and Information Centre Collections: Library and Information Science Text Series, (4th ed.), Englewood: Libraries Unlimited.
10. Filson CK (2015). A Comparative Study of Collection Management Practices of University of Cape Coast and University of Education, Winneba Libraries, Ghana, Thesis Submitted to the University of Ghana, Legon in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the award of MPhil Information Studies Degree, University of Ghana, Legon.
11. Flatley R, Prock K (2009). E-Resource Collection Development: A Survey of Current Practices in Academic Libraries, Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal).