Access and Use of E-Resources in Tanzanian Academic and Research Institutions: A Summary of Survey Report

COTUL

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of a survey conducted by COTUL Task Force that was formed in Bagamoyo on 3rd September 2011. COTUL formed a Task Force to investigate the usage of e-resources in various universities and research institutions in the country. The Task Force was composed of principal researchers who were appointed as Team Leaders. They were assisted by co-researchers who helped them with data collection.

In order to carry out the exercise smoothly, the country was divided into 9 zones. Each zone was assigned one Principal Researcher and several Co-researchers. The nine zones were: Southern Highlands, Arusha and Kilimanjaro (A and B), Bagamoyo and Zanzibar, Mwanza and Dodoma. Dar es Salaam was divided into 4 different zones (A, B, C and D) because it has relatively more institutions compared with other zones.

METHODOLOGY

Survey method was used in all zones, where some institutions were selected with a view to representing the rest. This was done purposively and conveniently.

Data collection methods that were predominantly used in all the groups were face-to-face interview, physical observation of the computers available and their usage, and focus group discussions in some cases.

The respondents in this survey were: Heads of libraries, the library staff managing e- resources, and in a few cases consultations were made with top institutional leaders.

FINDINGS

Institutions Visited

Table 1: Institutions Visited by Zones

ZONE	INSTITUTIONS VISITED	TOTAL
Southern Highlands	TEKU, MIST, OUT,RUCO, SUA, MUCE, Mzumbe, Tumaini, MUM, Jordan University, MUC (Mbeya)	11
Arusha/ Kili. Zone A	Nelson Mandela, TPRI, EAC, Mt Meru University, ESAMI	5
Arusha and Kilimanjaro Zone B	College of African Wildlife Management, Mwenge University College of Education, MUCCOBS, KCMC, Arusha University, Makumira Univ. College, Institute of Accountancy Arusha	7
Bagamoyo and Zanzibar	SUZA, Zanzibar University, University College of Education, Zanzibar Library Services, Zanzibar Institute of Financial Administration, SLADS, ADEM	7
Mwanza Dodoma	SAUT, Bugando, NIMR, IRDP, St John's University, CBE, UDOM	7
Dar es Salaam Zone A	Aga Khan University, Centre for Foreign Relations, DIT, IFM, MUHAS	5
Dar es Salaam Zone B	COSTECH, Institute of Taxi Administration, and Institute of Social Work.	3
Dar es Salaam Zone C	TUDARCO, CBE, Tanzania Institute of Education, UDSM, The open University of Tanzania (OUT)	5
Dar es Salaam	Ardhi University (AU), Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF),	5

Zone D	Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre (TFNC), Research on Poverty Alleviation (REPOA) Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP)	
TOTAL		**55**

The table above shows that a total of 55 institutions were covered in all 9 zones, comprising universities, university colleges and research institutes.

Findings from the Survey

Registration of e-resources
The survey findings showed that some institutions have not registered to use e-resources. For example, in the Southern Highlands zone, only 6 out of the 11 (54.5%) institutions visited have properly registered. The main problems hindering registration were lack of registration skills, lack of IP address and non availability of the internet services.

DSM Zone A: All the 5 visited institutions (AG, DIT, IFM, MUHAS and CFR) have registered for PERI resources. IP addresses were verified and found to be correct.

DSM Zone B: Three institutions were visited and only 1 (33.3%) (Institute of Tax Administration) had not registered. Reasons given include lack of the internet services and a server. The remaining 2 (66.6%) had registered.

Kilimajaro/Arusha Zone B: Four institutions had registered correctly, CAWM, Makumira University, Arusha University and IAA. Two others MUCCoBs and KCMC had registered without IP addresses. Only 1 (Mwenge University College of Education) had not registered.

Zanzibar and Bagamoyo Zone: Only 2 (40%) (SUZA and ADEM) out of the 5 visited institutions had registered properly. The remaining 3 had problems with registration of PERI resources.

They have inappropriate IP addresses as well as missing details in their registration forms. The report points out that in an attempt to register, getting IP address was a problem because System Administrators were not involved in the process of managing e-resources right from the beginning. A number of institutions have registered for very few resources, while others have registered for resources that were not even relevant to their areas of study. SLADS was a case in point.

Mwanza/Dodoma Zone: It was noted that some institutions have registered properly eg. SAUT, while others have not registered l eg. BUCHS, CBE, St John's and UDOM. At UDOM, efforts were made to register, and the System Administrator provided the researcher with IP address range for the staff to register.

DSM Zone D: All the visited institutions have registered for the resources except TGNP. The number of resources registered range from 0 (at TGNP) to 25 (at AU).   At TGNP, where no registration has been done, the Task Force managed to inquire and got the IP address and demonstrated registration process, as well as recommending a number of databases to be registered for.

The issue which is still not clear however, is the extent to which the registered resources are relevant to the information needs of the researchers in those institutions; SLADS for example is a case in point.

Summary

Registration situation can be summarized as follows:

ZONE	No. of Institutions	Registered	Not Registered	Total
Southern Highlands	11	6 (54.5)	5 (45.5)	11
Arusha/Kilimanjaro. A	5	-	-	Not Indicated
Arusha/Kilimanjaro. B	7	4 (57.1)	3 (42.9)	7
Dar es salaam A	5	5	-	5
Dar es salaam B	3	2	1	3
Dar es salaam C	5	5 (100%)		5
Dar es salaam D	5	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	5
Mwanza/Dodoma	7	4 (57.1)	3 (42.9)	7
Bagamoyo/Zanzibar	7	3 (42.9)	4(57.1)	7
Total	55	33 (66%)	17 (34%)	50 5 Not indicated

Accessibility and Usage of the Resources

A discussion between the Task Force Team and the librarians on accessibility and use of e-resources revealed a number of challenges with regards to access and use of the resources. These are summarized below:

Awareness

(i) There is lack of awareness among the teaching staff and researchers on the availability of e-resources. They are not aware of the existence of such resources and how to access them. In Dar es Salaam Zone C for example, only 2 libraries out of 5 (40%) have made some efforts to market their resources through conducting IL training and have used Notice Boards to advertise their e-resources.

The Dodoma workshop had a component on the effective use of the e-resources. Probably there might have been   some changes after that workshop.

Availability of Computers
Arusha and Kilimanjaro zone: All the member institutions had computers connected to the Internet. The problem however, was that the number of computers were not enough. This seems to be a common problem in many institutions.

Bandwidth
Bandwidth was also mentioned as a challenge in accessing the resources. This problem however, will be solved after the connectivity of Fiber Optic Cable in these institutions; an initiative which is now at an advanced stage.

ICT Illiteracy
The overall problem of ICT illiteracy was also noted in this survey. The teaching staff and researchers were not ICT competent. As noted by some researchers, computers were for secretaries. In some cases, computers were used for Word Processing only.

Searching Competence
The problem of competence in searching the resources was also noted in many reports. The staff and researchers were not comfortable in conducting searches for e-resources. This problem was mentioned in several reports.

Problems in Accessing Full Text
For some of the databases, only the abstracts could be accessed. If you want to get a full text of an article, the databases requested user name and password, which are not provided, or instructs you to make subscription to the resource.
Institutions such as AG, CFR, IFM, reported this problem.

Review of COTUL's Activities
Generally, Heads of Libraries in many institutions were aware of COTUL and its activities. In some zones however, the level of awareness was rather too low. In the Mbeya/Iringa/Morogoro zone for example, only 6 out of the 11 institutions visited, were fully

aware of COTUL. MUC (Mbeya), OUT Iringa and Jordan University (Morogoro) were completely unaware of COTUL.

In Dar es Salaam Zone D, all the institutions were aware of COTUL and its activities. With the exception of REPOA and TGNP, all Heads of Libraries attended COTUL AGM.

It is also reported that all institutions have paid their contributions.

COTUL's management was blamed for failure to send invoices on time. They suggested that the invoices should reach the institutions before the end of financial year.

In the Zanzibar/Bagamoyo Zone, many library staff were aware of COTUL and its activities. They were also impressed by the Dodoma workshop and the AGM and its outcome. However, the top institutional managements were not quite clear about COTUL.

In this zone, payments for subscription to e-resources have been made by most of the institutions visited, some partially others fully.

CONCLUSIONS
Based on the study, the following conclusions are made:

Registration
There is quite a good number of institutions (34%) which have not registered for e- resources.
Getting an IP address from Institutional Computing Centres/ Internet Service Providers for registration process was problematic. This was mentioned by TGNP, UDOM, etc.

There is lack of knowledge among the Librarians on how to register for the resources.

Some of the institutions have registered for databases that are not relevant to their areas of specialization, for example SLADS.

Marketing

There is low level of awareness among the library users on the kind of databases available. This implies that not much effort has been put in marketing the resources. The trend may possibly change with the marketing workshop organized in Dodoma, in September 2011.

Level of Usage

It was revealed that there is low level of usage of the e-resources. Not many researchers use the e-journals. A report prepared by INASP and submitted to COTUL to assist it in the section process for the 2012 resources also show the usage pattern which is very low.   This was also discussed at the Tanga Annual General Meeting held in 2010.

Institutions with no postgraduate students were found to have very low usage of PERii resources.

Lack of Well Established ICT Infrastructure

In some libraries, it was noted that there is a problem of lack of well established ICT infrastructure. More precisely, this includes:

(i)   Few computers compared to the number of users, e.g. Center for Foreign Relations, University of Dar es Salaam, Institute of Finance Management,

(ii)   Lack of competent staff to handle ICT matters e.g. Center for Foreign Relations, Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS), Dar es Salaam Institute of Technology (DIT). Also library staff have low ICT and search skills.

(iii)   Poor/no internet connectivity e.g. MUHAS.

(iv)   Power problems/fluctuations/cuts.

Communication

It was also revealed that there is weak communication between individual institutions and COTUL. Areas that were most affected are registration, payment modalities, accesses to some resources, and other administration matters related to COTUL.

Appreciation

There was a general expression of appreciation from different libraries on the efforts made to visit and assist with the registration of the resources. This was particularly for those libraries which had not used the resources before. It was very important for them to acquire the knowledge on registration and access to e-resources. Some institutions like TIE for example, requested COTUL to send experts from time to time to assist them with expertise in e-resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Registration
We need to make a continued follow-up to ensure that those institutions which have not registered for e-resources, or are not conversant with the registration process are assisted by COTUL. The Task Force team tried to show them how to register, and in some cases, they actually registered for them. However, one cannot be ascertained that they are conversant enough to do so on their own. At any rate, we need to make a follow-up on this.

Marketing the Resources

There is a strong need for marketing the resources. More efforts are needed to ensure that the library users and the management of institutions are aware of the resources that are available. Marketing techniques and strategies were taught at the Dodoma workshop. A follow-up to establish if the training has been put into use is necessary.

User Name and Password
Several libraries mentioned the existence of this problem. It is advised that the librarians in-charge of e-resources should write to the Suppliers wherever this problem occurs. All the suppliers are bound to ensure that institutions access full text articles. Any problems related to access should be communicated to the suppliers directly, copying to INASP.

Financing COTUL

For easy and sustainable funding of COTUL, it was proposed (DSM D) that COTUL should seek alternative funding sources from the government through its organs such as COSTECH or TCU. This will enable COTUL to function without depending on contributions from members only.

Increased Membership

It was also recommended that more members need to be mobilized to join COTUL so that the unit cost of maintaining COTUL's activities goes down. To what extent are new members ready to pay for the resources? Should we have many members who are not necessarily committed, OR have a few who are highly committed?

Strengthening Communication

COTUL needs to strengthen communication with its members. This can be done in several ways including:

- Establishing a functional Website as a tool for communication;
- Creation of a database of COTUL member institutions and
- Effective use of e mails.