

# FRAMEWORK FOR ENSURING QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES OF GHANA

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## **A**bstract

*The study examines the existing internal and external frameworks for quality assurance and management in university libraries. It also discusses the standards required by the external quality assurance agency, the National Accreditation Board (NAB) of Ghana to ensure high quality library services in the universities and other tertiary institutions. The study also recommends some measures that could be put in place under the core operations or functions of the library to enable them meet continuous quality assurance targets.*

*Keywords: Quality Assurance, University Libraries, Ghana, Frameworks.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The library remains one of the most critical facilities that contributes to the quality of university education. The university library contribute directly to the core business of a university, teaching, learning, research and public service. In recent times, university libraries are asked to operate with increased effectiveness and efficiency, and cognizant of the continuing evolution of library services in an era of information digitization (Hsieh, Chin & Wu, 2005). An acceptable/effective way that university libraries can achieve and maintain the goals of meeting service quality and the needs of users is to use performance measurement methods that provide opportunity for improving performance and effectiveness. Measuring the success of library service has historically focused on the attainment of physical development. In recent times the practice has shifted towards the assessment of service quality which is critical for creating an environment for academic growth and development (Thompson & Cook, 2002).

Quality assessment and assurance involves the determination of the degree to which users find the library services/resources/facilities to be satisfactory. In measuring library service quality, it is important to take into consideration the total investment in the library. The inputs must be measured against the outputs or outcomes. Measuring the

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inputs take into consideration resources that are applied to enable the library provide services such as financial, information, and human resource inputs. The library outputs on the other hand refer to the amount or the number of services generated from the library investment. This also covers quantities, qualities and values of the service delivery. Measuring outputs also take into consideration accountability, management of resources and promotion of the library. The libraries must also consider feedback from the users. According to (Okiy, 2006) university libraries must contribute significantly to enhance quality of academic and research work in the university. Quality assurance and management has therefore, become a necessary requirement by both internal and external units and agencies of institutions of higher learning and it requires critical attention. University library administrators must therefore show commitment to make quality assurance and management a strategic planning issue. It is important for these libraries to put adequate mechanism in place to ensure that the library meet the required standards in their operations.

The university library operates within certain guidelines usually developed by the institution responsible for national accreditation and quality assurance. Library administrators should therefore not wait until it is time for the usual periodic assessment by these external agencies before they put their house in order.

The need for internal quality assurance and management frameworks in university libraries cannot therefore be over-emphasized. Most of the universities in Ghana have set up quality assurance units to help regulate the operations of the universities. However, the emphasis has been on academic issues and programmes. Enough work has not been done in developing frameworks and guidelines that will ensure quality assurance in the university libraries of Ghana

Despite the critical role played by these libraries in academic work, many universities in Ghana have not shown enough interest and commitment in ensuring quality assurance in their libraries. This study is therefore aimed at reviewing and developing a framework that will ensure continuous internal quality assurance and management in these libraries.

The objectives of the study are as follows;

- (1) To examine the quality assurance systems in place in university libraries of Ghana.
- (2) To recommend/develop a framework for ensuring internal quality assurance in university libraries of Ghana.
- (3) To provide a system that will ensure that university libraries comply with national quality assurance standards.
- (4) To recommend/develop a mechanism for measuring the performances indicators of university libraries.

**Quality:** There are various definitions of the word quality, but (Green & Harvey, 1993) identify five different approaches to define quality in higher education:

- (a) In terms of consistency
  - (b) In terms of exceptional (high standards)
  - (c) As fitness for purpose (meeting stated purpose)
  - (d) As a value for money and
  - (e) As transformative (transformation of participants)
- (Garvin, 1988) also identify five different approaches to defining quality:
- (f) Transcendent approach (quality always exists)
  - (g) Product-based approach (products meeting high quality standards)
  - (h) User-based approach (quality to meet user's requirements)
  - (i) Manufacturing-based approach
  - (j) Value-based approach

(Brophy, 1993) on the other hand defines quality as the closest fit to user's need that resources permit. with regards to information system the definition of quality pertains to the following:

- (1) Performance of information systems.
- (2) Quality and quantity of the documents.
- (3) Quality of information products, based on the defined norms or criteria.
- (4) User satisfaction in terms of value for information content.
- (5) Cost effectiveness for providing information services.
- (6) Accuracy of services.
- (7) Adequacy of information services.
- (8) Timeliness of information services.

International Standards for Organization (ISO 8402, 1986) also define quality as the totality of features and characteristics of a product or services that bear its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs. Quality can also be defined as a means of ensuring that best practices are encouraged (Kisailowska, 2002). Quality must ensure the meeting of customer expectations at the least cost, which encompasses all phases of design, production and delivery of a product/service. From the above, it is evident that quality can change with time which implies the need for periodic revision of specifications. It should also be noted that quality include aspects of usability, safety, availability, reliability, maintainability, economics and environment.

**Quality Control:** Quality control refers to the operational techniques and activities that are used to fulfil requirements for quality, usually interpreted to mean conformance to the required specifications (Tannock, 1992). Operational techniques and activities aimed both at monitoring a process and eliminating causes of unsatisfactory performance of relevant stages of quality loop-spiral.

**Total Quality Management (TQM):** Total Quality Management is an integrated organizational approach in delighting both external and internal customers by meeting their expectations on a continuous basis through everyone involved with the organization and working on continuous improvement of all products/services and procedures along with proper problem solving methodology. The four basic principles that explain the nature of Total Quality Management are as follows:

- (a) Delight of customer. This refers to the type of services that would delight the customer. This can only be achieved if you know the needs of the customer.
- (b) Management by facts
- (c) Knowing the quality standards of the products is the first step in the process of quality improvement.
- (d) Knowledge of facts: Knowledge of facts at all levels is an essential aspect of continuous improvement.

### **People –Based Management**

This refers to the fact that systems, standards and technology themselves cannot provide quality. People must understand what to do and be ready to review the progress of their work for continuous improvement of quality. Total Quality Management aim at continuous improvement.

### **Quality Assurance**

(Adebayo, 2009) define quality assurance as a way of measuring, improving and maintaining the quality of any human activity that has value, it may be academic, business etc.

(Carley & Waldron, 1984) also define quality assurance as planned and deliberate actions or activities instigated and carried out with the intent and purpose of maintaining and improving the quality of learning for participants. (ISO 8402, 1986) on the other hand define quality assurance as that aspect of overall management function that determines and implement quality policy. Quality assurance can therefore be defined as a planned and systematic approach to monitoring, assessing and improving quality services on a continuous basis within an organization.

Quality assurance in libraries is intended to provide the mechanism for quality management and quality control for the library. According to (Frazer, 1992) university which takes quality assurance serious emerges as a self critical community of students, teachers, support staff and senior managers each contributing to and striking for continued improvement.

Quality assurance regulates both internal and external activities of an educational institution. Ensuring quality assurance in university libraries therefore means that there must be a striking balance between what should be or what ought to be in the libraries.

Quality assurance ensures that there is effective and efficient library services and adequate provisions in aid to maintaining standards. (Monash University, 2008) asserts that the library in assuring quality assurance should be committed to best practices in service provision, resource management, financial administration and accountability. The library must also ensure that the right type of library services, materials, optimize their services. Quality assurance in university libraries should be built on the foundation of its vision, mission and values.

### **Objectives of Quality Assurance in University Libraries**

From the above, the objectives of quality assurance in university libraries, may be stated as follows:

- (1) To ensure that the libraries maintain high standards in the policies, systems and processes for the development, maintenance and enhancement of quality in all its services.
- (2) To ensure that the libraries focus their attention on continuous improvement.
- (3) To ensure that the libraries assess/evaluates the overall status of quality management of its operations.
- (4) To help define purpose benchmarking and threshold stands.
- (5) To ensure accountability with respect to the investment made in the libraries.

### **Internal Quality Assurance in University Libraries**

It is important for libraries to develop their own internal quality assurance structures and policies for self evaluation. There must be a set of written internal quality assurance procedures to ensure that university libraries conform to the national framework or standards. Quality assurance in university libraries therefore involves periodic self assessment to ensure that the library consistently meet national and international standards. The library must also identify the key success factors and put in place the necessary mechanism that will encourage improvement. They must also understand the needs of the users and share results with stakeholders.

Benchmarking should also be encouraged in the areas of document delivery, acquisition of resources, cataloguing, loan return and shelving practices etc.

### **External Quality Assurance in University Libraries**

The External quality assurance is performed by an external organization or quality assurance agency outside the institution. The external organization assesses the total operations of the institution or its programmes including the library to determine if it meets the agreed upon or pre-determined standards. The external quality assurance agencies are usually regulated by law. In Ghana the agency responsible for external quality assurance in higher education is the National Accreditation Board (CHE 2008; Sanyal & Martin, 2007).

### **Methods use for ensuring External Quality Assurance**

**Quality Audit:** This is the process of quality assessment by which an external body ensures that the institution conforms to quality standards and procedures.

**Quality Assessment:** This refers to the actual process of external evaluation which involve (reviewing, measuring and judging of the quality of higher educational institutions and programmes including the library.

**Accreditation:** This also refers to the process by which an external body evaluates the quality of a higher educational institution as a whole or of a specific programme in order to formally recognize it as having met certain pre-determined minimal criteria or standard.

### **Methods Used for Accreditation**

- (a) Self assessment
- (b) Document analysis
- (c) Scrutiny of performance indicators
- (d) Peer visits
- (e) Specialy constituted panels
- (f) Stakeholder's survey

### **Purpose of External Quality Assurance**

**Quality Control:** It is to ensure that higher-education provision is in line with minimum quality requirements.

**Accountability:** To re-assure external stakeholders of the level of high quality standards and To ensure improvement of the existing practices by establishing self-assessment of procedures in higher educational institutions (Martin & Stella, 2007, UNESCO, 2006).

### **The Effects of Accreditation on University Libraries**

The effects of accreditation on university libraries are as follows:

- (1) Promote the physical development of the university libraries
- (2) Assist university libraries to achieve self-determined goals.
- (3) Involve peer-reviewers during site visits/inspections.
- (4) Enhance the quality of library/information services.
- (5) Improve staff working environment
- (6) Encourage professional development of staff.

### **Frameworks for Ensuring Internal Quality Assurance in the University Libraries**

(Ton, 1993) suggests the following standards as a way for establishing and maintaining quality assurance in university libraries;

- (1) Know the customer needs either stated or implied.
- (2) Design services to meet the needs of the users.
- (3) Faultless delivery of services.
- (4) Provide suitable facilities such as car parks, café, toilets etc.
- (5) Provide reliable equipment such as computers and other electronic facilities.
- (6) Efficient library administration system.
- (7) Monitoring and evaluation including customer expectations, complaints, opportunity for recommendations, feedbacks to encourage continuous improvement.
- (8) A good accommodation, seating, lighting, clean environment etc.

### **1. Integration and Liaison**

- a) How does the library and computing departments become aware of course development and review?
- b) Do these arrangements work well; meeting the real needs in a timely manner?
- c) How does the library, computing and teaching staff communicate with one another, and how well does this work?
- d) In what ways are students and staff encouraged and enabled to make effective use of library and computing services available?

### **2. Relevance of Learning Materials**

- a) Are the available library and computing resources appropriate (quality) and sufficient (quantity) to support the taught courses in particular with respect to books, periodicals, software, databases and equipment?
- b) How are these learning resources delivered to users.

### **3. Availability and Accessibility**

- a) How well – matched is the availability and locations of service to the needs of the students and other users?
- b) How accessible are library IT facilities for all groups of students (eg. Part time, disabled and distance students)?
- c) How adequate (quantity) are the library study accommodation for students' needs?
- d) How adequate (quantity) and suitable (quality) are the workstations and other computing and data networking facilities for students needs?

### **4. User Support**

- a) What training is offered to students and staff?
- b) What arrangements are in place for promoting services and responding to enquiries?
- c) How effective are they?
- d) What steps are taken to enhance and update library and computing skills in order to ensure the quality of support services?

## 5. Evaluation and Feedback

- How frequently are the library facilities/resources/services evaluated?
- How is the result of evaluation feedback into the system for continuous improvement.

The above framework is applicable in the Ghanaian University Libraries. The framework when implemented will enable the libraries to address the possible challenges with regards to the quality of collections, services, facilities and relationship between the library and other departments. This will eventually help to maintain high standards and quality assurance in the libraries.

The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia has developed a framework for library quality assurance and this is shown in Figure 1.

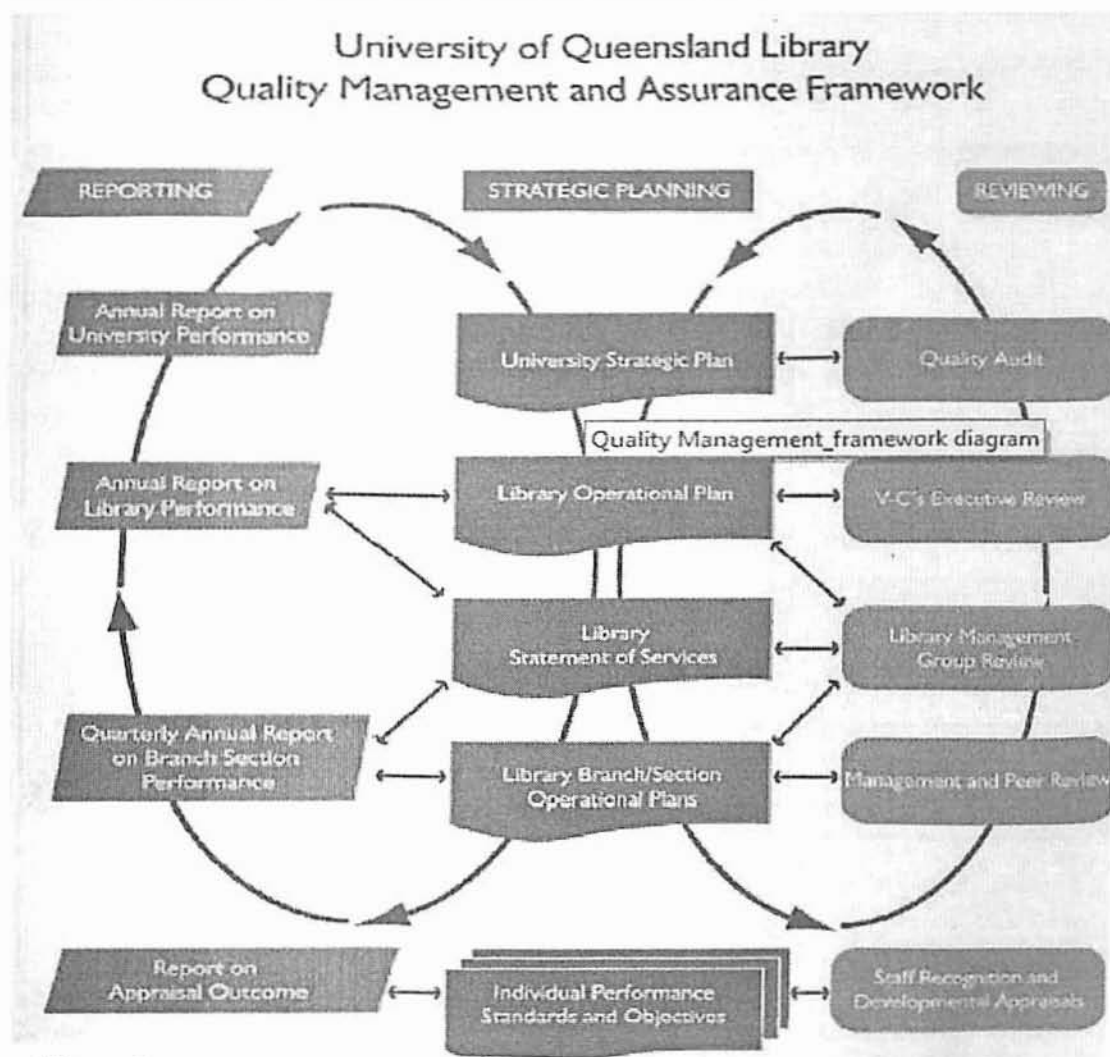


Figure 1  
(Jordan, Elizabeth, 2007)



In the above framework the quality management and assurance is a component and developed through the strategic planning process. The plan is divided into three phases which consists of the planning, doing or Implementation, Reporting and Reviewing phases. Planning As illustrated in figure 1 above, the University of Queensland Library has made quality assurance part of the strategic plan with clear operational plans and objects on how to ensure quality assurance.

### **Doing or Implementation**

The framework ensures that quality assurance plan is implemented based on the action plan for each of the section, departments/branches.

**Reporting:** There is an effective reporting system on quality assurance on regular basis.

**Reviewing:** There is also a regular review of performance of individuals, sections, departments, branches and the library as a whole as part of the framework in order to achieve the aims of the plan.

### **Underlining Principles of the Framework**

- (1) Commitment to clear identification of strategic objectives and priorities for action.
- (2) Support for redirection of resources to meet recommendations for change emanating from reviews and to support strategic objectives.
- (3) Support for staff development to ensure continuous improvement and excellence.
- (4) Devolution of responsibility to its most effective organization level, with clear lines of accountability.

### **Quantitative Assessment**

- (1) The quantitative assessment is done through the following;
- (2) Collect statistics to measure inputs.
- (3) Analysis of data.
- (4) Reporting the results.
- (5) Benchmarking.

### **Qualitative Assessment**

The qualitative assessment is also done through;

- (1) Client satisfaction surveys.
- (2) Staff perceptions surveys.
- (3) Focus groups.
- (4) Observational/usability studies.

### **Client Satisfaction Survey**

Conduct user satisfaction every two years on the following;

- (1) Communication
- (2) Service quality

- (3) Service delivery
- (4) Facilities and equipment
- (5) Library staff

Quality assurance programmes has led to the following:

- (1) Re developed website
- (2) Re furbished spaces
- (3) Provision of online information skills
- (4) Development of programmes for post graduates
- (5) Staff wellness and future focus programmes

### **External Quality Assurance – The Standards Required by the National Accreditation Board (NAB) of Ghana**

The National Accreditation Board of Ghana believe that the operating environment of libraries is changing very fast and a library is of central importance to any tertiary institution. The guidelines and standards for university libraries must therefore, take into consideration the current changing library environment. The NAB criteria of assessment for ensuring quality assurance are, discussed as follows:

#### ***Staffing***

##### **Appointment of Head of the Library**

- (1) The NAB guidelines recommend that one of the early appointments in a tertiary institution should be the Head of the library. It suggests that the Head of the library should be at post at least twelve months to the opening of the institution. This is to ensure that the library is set up and information services is available on the first day students enrol in the institution.
- (2) The guidelines also suggest that the Head of library must have at least a Masters degree in Librarianship or Information science with considerable post qualification experience.
- (3) The Head of the library must be of faculty status.
- (4) The Librarian should report directly to the Head of the institution.

##### ***Other Library Staff***

1. The NAB believes that the effective performance of a university library depends on its staff. The number and levels of staff are determined by the programmes being taught by the institution, number of service points and opening hours and type of services offered.
- (1) The staff of the university libraries requires diversified backgrounds in order to meet the teaching, learning and research needs of users.
- (2) Staff must also have the appropriate educational background in library and information science.
- (3) The library staff strength should also correspond to the students and faculty ratio.

### ***Management and Governance***

- (1) The NAB guidelines recommend that the university library must have the following structures in place:
- (2) Library Board or Committee. This Board or Committee should be chaired by a very senior officer of the university such as the Pro Vice Chancellor.
- (3) The membership of the Board or Committee should have representation from Faculties, Departments, Finance Committee, Administration, Academic Board and Students Representative Council.
- (4) The Board or Committee should be an advisory or policy-making committee.
- (5) The Library should be an Academic department
- (6) Participative management should be encouraged.
- (7) The library should be widely represented on the major university statutory committees such as Academic Board, Academic Planning and Quality Assurance etc. This is to ensure that the library is fully involved in decision making.

### ***Budgeting***

- (1) The NAB recommends that universities must invest considerable amount of money to enable the library acquire and develop materials, resources and services to the university community.
- (2) The library requires annual investments to retain its value.
- (3) The National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) recommends that 10% of the total budget of the university should be spent on the library.

### ***Collection Development***

- (1) The basic function of a library is to select, collect, organize and provide access to all varieties of information to users.
- (2) University libraries must have a collection development policy with clearly stated selection criteria.

### ***Access and Services***

One of the main functions of a university library is to provide access to a broad range of information services to the university community. The services should include, reference, inter-library lending, selective dissemination of information, question and answer service etc.

### ***Computing Facilities***

Provide adequate number of computers in the library.

- (1) Local Area Network
- (2) Internet connectivity
- (3) Number of photocopiers
- (4) Other electronic facilities
- (5) Electronic information resources should be available
- (6) Multimedia projectors etc.

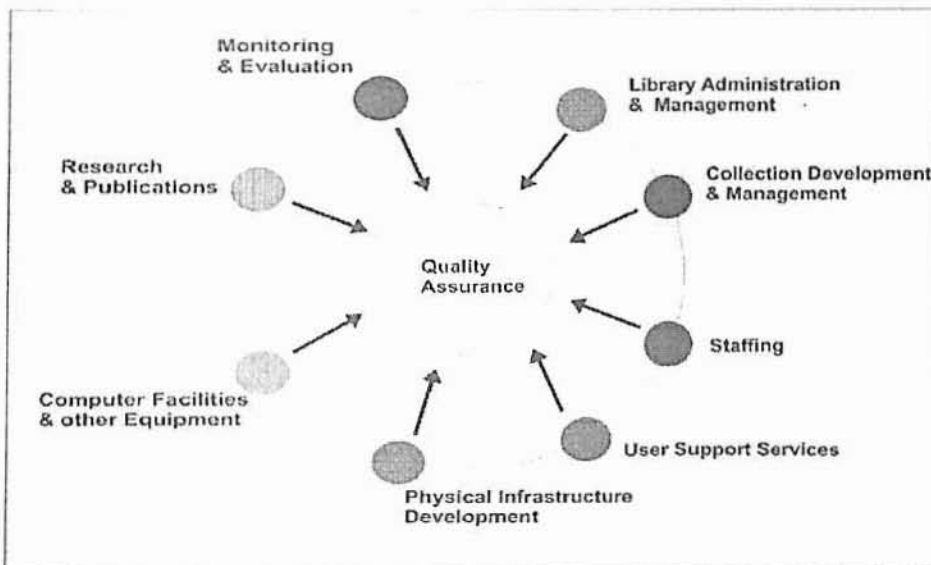
### **Buildings / Physical Facilities**

- (a) The library should be centrally located and be easily accessible to the university community.
- (b) It should be well lighted, clean, comfortable.
- (c) The building should be user-friendly and have facilities for the physically challenged.
- (d) Adequate seats and book shelves.
- (e) There should be adequate space for facilities and services such as catalogue, reference, acquisition, computing facilities, staff office etc.
- (f) The library should provide seats in the library for about 30% of the total student population.
- (g) There should be space allowance of 2.3m<sup>2</sup> for each student or user.
- (h) Space allowance for one carrel is 3.7m<sup>2</sup>.
- (i) The average working space per head for staff is 11m<sup>2</sup>.

A stack area of 210cm height and 90cm width consisting of six shelves should hold 120 volume of books.

The distance between range of shelves should not be less than 1.3m. (NAB, 2012)

### **Framework for ensuring internal quality assurance in the university libraries of Ghana**



**Figure 2**

In order to meet and sustain higher quality standards in the university libraries of Ghana, the libraries should be guided by the above framework.

As illustrated in Figure 2 above, there is a relationship between the core functions of the library namely, Library administration and management, collection development

and management, staffing, user support services, physical infrastructure development, computer facilities and other equipment, research and publications, monitoring and evaluation.

These activities must be given equal attention, because they collectively contribute to ensure quality assurance in university libraries. Paying attention to one activity at the expense of the others will not enable the library to achieve total quality assurance.

There is therefore the need to pay equal attention to all the core activities of the library. The details on what should be done under the various core activities are discussed as follows:

### ***Library Administration and Management***

- (a) The university libraries must have clear vision, mission, objectives and core values that are aligned and compatible with the corporate vision, mission and values of their parent institutions.
- (b) The libraries must have a periodic strategic plan with measurable targets.
- (c) The libraries must have an effective organisational structure and management system in place. The organisational structure should enhance the potential for the fulfilment of its stated mission, vision, goals and objectives.
- (d) The library must be involved in the institutional decision-making and budgeting processes, this will ensure adequate funding for the library.
- (e) The library must contribute to the continuous improvement of the identity or image of the university.
- (f) The library must have effective communication channels, accountability framework and cohesive committees. There must be in place structures to support the work of the library.
- (g) The library must have quality assurance policy to guide the operations of the library.
- (h) The library should not exist in isolation. It should cooperate with groups and other networks both within and outside the institution.

### ***Collection Development and Management***

- (a) The libraries must ensure they have adequate information resources to fulfil their stated missions, goals and objectives.
- (b) The collections should be of high quality, accessible, readily available and deliverable both on-site and off-site.
- (c) Promote and encourage optimal use of learning resources.
- (d) There should be a collection development policy to guide acquisition of books/materials.
- (e) There should be periodic assessment and evaluation of library collections by the stakeholders.
- (f) There should be a plan for managing the electronic information resources.

- (g) The information resources should be properly organized and processed for easy retrieval.
- (h) Collections should be organised in such a way that they can easily be located and retrieved within the library.
- (i) The collections offered by university libraries are a central part of the infrastructure for teaching, learning and research. The library must therefore ensure that the collections are relevant, adequate, accessible and available.

### ***Staffing***

- (1) The library must recruit highly qualified and experienced staff with diverse background to manage the library at all levels.
- (2) The staff must be motivated and encouraged to show adequate commitment, positive attitude and professionalism to their work.
- (3) There should be evidence of team work among staff.
- (4) Staff must develop and share best practices.
- (5) Staff must meet regularly to discuss issues concerning the library operations and the users.
- (6) There should be continuous staff training and development programmes.

### ***User Support Services***

- (1) The university library must develop and provide services that support the needs of the users. The services must focus on the needs of the users and there should be mechanism for user feedback through surveys and evaluation.
- (2) Services must be developed to satisfy all user groups including the physically challenged.
- (3) Opening hours must be consistent with demands for services.
- (4) Book lending services should be available online, eg. Online renewal, reservation and hold.
- (5) The turn-around time for serving users should be drastically low.
- (6) Availability of adequate library services eg. Reference, current awareness, selective dissemination of information, referral, inter-library loan, question and answer services etc.
- (7) There should be users' manuals or guidelines to guide the use of the library.
- (8) User empowerment through user orientation / training/education.
- (9) The Library must comply with the copyright laws at all times.
- (10) Teaching of information literacy. A university library should be responsible for teaching information literacy skills to both faculty and students.
- (11) Access to library facilities should be available outside normal working hours and over the weekend.

### ***Physical Infrastructure Development***

- (1) The library should be centrally located to make it accessible to the entire university community.
- (2) The library premises should be suitable for both short and long terms use.
- (3) The library facilities should be accessible, available and user friendly.
- (4) Library buildings should be designed to provide convenient access for users, including the physically challenged.
- (5) There should be adequate lights, book shelves etc.
- (6) There should be adequate seats for the users.
- (7) The entire library environment should be very conducive for learning and research.

### ***Computing Facilities and other Equipment***

In order to operate effectively and efficiently the university library must be fully automated and have adequate computing facilities such as computers, laptops, photocopiers, scanners, internet connectivity and audio-visual materials.

There should be access to standard hardware, software including appropriate e-learning platforms for all programmes particularly distance learning.

### ***Research and Publications***

A university library should conduct periodic research and surveys with the aim of improving services in the future.

The library and staff should also publish regularly to inform users and other stakeholders about the developments in the field of librarianship.

### ***Monitoring and Evaluation***

- (1) The university libraries must put measures in place to ensure periodic assessment and evaluation of the various performance indicators such as collections, services, information organization, physical facilities etc.
- (2) It is important to solicit the views, opinions of the users on library collections and services.
- (3) There should be a mechanism for obtaining and considering user feedback into the continuous improvement process.
- (4) The assessment of the library must involve both the internal and external stakeholders.

### ***Suggested ratio that can help to check and maintain quality assurance in university libraries***

What percentage (%) of the university budget is spent on the library. – In Ghana, NCTE recommends 10%.

Expenditure on acquisitions of information resources eg. Books, periodicals, journals, databases per FTE student.

- (1) General operating expenses of the library.
- (2) Ratio of volumes added to the collections per annum.
- (3) Number of books purchased per FTE student and faculty.
- (4) Volumes in collection per FTE student.
- (5) Book loan per FTE student.
- (6) Ratio of volumes for titles (multiple copies).
- (7) Turn-around rate (ratio between circulation and collection size).
- (8) Ratio of volumes to combined total students (UG and PG if applicable) and faculty Staff FTE.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The need to establish and maintain higher standards in the university libraries for the purpose of ensuring quality assurance cannot be over-emphasized. University libraries must therefore be very conscious and work continuously to meet and sustain the required standards by the National external regulation agencies right from the time of setting up the library. The sustenance of higher quality library services can only be achieved through periodic self evaluation using the internal quality assurance frameworks.

There is no justification to deny a university accreditation or re-accreditation on the basis of the inability of the library to meet the required national standards, if libraries will adhere to internal self assessment and evaluation using the above suggested frameworks.

The support of stakeholders namely government, employers, academic world, students, parents and staff is also very important in ensuring the provision of high quality library services that can enhance academic work.

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