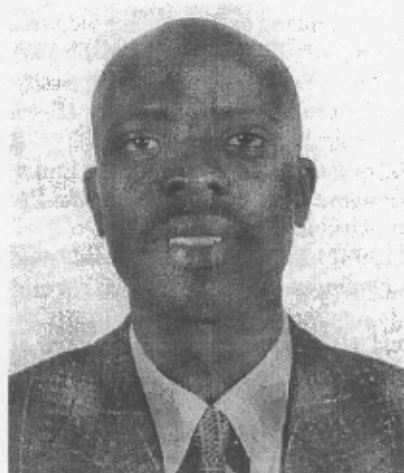


Modernization of Library and Information Services in Higher Education in Swaziland: strategic interventions, 2000/1–2005/6

Paiki Muswazi



Dickson Yumba



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Abstract

This is a discussion of the implementation of the University of Swaziland (UNISWA) strategic plan 2000/1–2005/6. The goal of the article is to assess the impact of the information technology, policies and procedures, collaboration, funding, management, human resources development, preservation, marketing and information service delivery strategies on the modernization of its library and information services (LIS). It is argued that UNISWA has effected considerable staff re-skilling and made some progress towards widening access to quality subscription based electronic resources and optimizing the utilization of open access materials. Implementation was negatively influenced by low funding, limited local content on the web, inadequate information and communication technology infrastructure, scarce professional skills, and restrictive policies and procedures. It concludes that further work revolving around the above factors, taking into account user needs for independent life long learning, is the key to deepening the modernization of LIS at UNISWA.

Keywords: university libraries; strategic plans; impact assessment; Swaziland

Introduction

Higher education institutions everywhere are increasingly under pressure to produce graduates who can effectively function in the information and knowledge economy. To this end, libraries play an important role in making available pertinent information resources and services, inculcating information literacy skills and fostering a culture of lifelong learning among students. The accomplishment of these responsibilities hinges on the availability of modernized library and information services (LIS) but many African university libraries, operating in harsh macro-economic environments, find themselves ill prepared to deliver on these mandates.

Willemse (2002) notes the serious inadequacies in the funding of African university libraries. Thus, although the Kingdom of Swaziland has only one university (University of Swaziland) the limited competition, if not its total absence, has not spared it the harsh realities of resource constraints. According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) standards, Swaziland is a medium human development country and donor funding is restricted to select socio-economic programmes which do not necessarily include university LIS. In recent times, the University of Swaziland Library (UNISWA) is increasingly under pressure to prove its worth and indeed to account for the expenditure it incurs. Rapid changes in the information environment threaten to relegate traditional library services to obsolescence. At the same time, shrinking government subventions force UNISWA to introduce cutbacks, especially the streamlining of journal subscriptions in order to cope with dwindling resources, introduction of new programmes, increased enrolment,

and the astronomical increases in the costs of information resources.

Against a backdrop of financial pressures, UNISWA was quick to realize that piecemeal cut-backs across its three campuses at Kwaluseni (the main campus), Luyengo (the agricultural campus) and Mbabane (the health sciences campus) are not the panacea (University of Swaziland, 2005). Systemic changes were essential to the modernization of LIS. To this end, UNISWA formed the Library Strategic Planning Sub-Committee (LSPSC) and embarked on a strategic planning process that resulted in the 2000/1–2005/6 strategic plan, the key elements of which are summarized in Table 1.

The planning process and the resultant plan provided clarity of purpose and a structured approach to the modernization of LIS at UNISWA. However, the real transformative work lay in the implementation of the plan. Muswazi (2002a) identifies the key issues influencing the UNISWA strategic plan, the related lessons and gives an initial assessment of implementation progress. In particular, he observes that by the end of 2003, limited implementation was achieved, confined to the information technology, physical infrastructure and management strategies. Since then, there is no evidence of a published overall review of the strategic interventions undertaken during the period 2000/1–2005/6 or of an assessment of impact on the modernization of LIS at UNISWA.

Objectives

The purpose of this article is to build on Muswazi's initial assessment. Specifically, the article seeks to provide a complete assessment of the strategic interventions and the cumulative impact on the modernization of LIS at UNISWA during the period 2000/1–2005/6.

Data

The data used in the assessment was collected from a review of the UNISWA website at <http://library.uniswa.sz>, documents (e.g. minutes and reports of the Library academic staff and Library strategic planning implementation sub-committee meetings); quarterly reports to the University Planning Centre; personal experiences of the co-authors; and literature on LIS in Swaziland.

Implementation Assessment, 2000/1–2005/6

Information Technology

During the period 2000/1–2005/6, UNISWA made considerable investments in electronic databases, the Internet and related infrastructure. In 2002, space at the lower ground floor of the Kwaluseni campus library was identified and cabled for the provision of computer laboratory facilities. Subsequently, additional mini-laboratories were set up at Kwaluseni in 2005 and Luyengo in 2006, respectively. In addition, the Library server was upgraded in 2006. The laboratories are an important venue for the delivery of badly needed online public access catalogue (OPAC), database and Internet information searching, orientation and training sessions.

Simultaneously, numerous electronic resources were acquired and the library website gives access to numerous subscription-based and open access databases as well as freely available web resources as shown in Table 2.

Complementing the Internet-based resources are 52 CD-ROM databases (17 subscribed and 35 donations).

By the beginning of 2006, UNISWA had also made a modest start on digitization. Specifically, the project entailed the scanning of past examination papers. The papers are accessible to students from the UNISWA library website.

The databases, laboratory facilities and an upgraded server are the foundation upon which further development of electronic services at UNISWA is anchored. One of the interventions envisaged in the strategic plan is the development of a proposal for the establishment of a position of systems librarian. Among other things, the incumbent would direct the harnessing of information technology to assist in the modernization of services. However, the position had neither been created nor filled by the end of 2006. Similarly, benchmarks such as the drafting of a proposal for an annual information technology budget provision and the drawing up of an in-house automation programme did not proceed. Cumulatively, this influenced the pace at which UNISWA progressed with the implementation of the information technology strategy.

Strategic issue	Enabling strategy	Benchmark
1. Information technology	1. Invest in electronic databases, the Internet and other telecommunication infrastructure to give users access to a wide range of information sources	1. Purchase the databases
	2. Provide and upgrade hardware to access electronic databases	2. Appoint systems librarian
	3. Develop proposals for and establish a position for systems librarian	
2. Physical infrastructure	1. Develop and implement a master plan for the development of university library infrastructure in consultation with stakeholders	1. Draft master plan for extension of the Luyengo and Mbabane libraries 2. Seek approval of master plan
3. Policies and procedures	1. Compile a university policy and procedure handbook which should be subject to periodic updating 2. Update the status of the library to clearly reflect its function and relative importance in the university system	1. Consolidate and compile a policy and procedure handbook
4. Collaboration	1. Subscribe to relevant regional and international consortia	1. Establish library link steering committee 2. Identify relevant consortia 3. Establish budget line to support links with library consortia
5. Funding	1. Solicit funds and other library resources before introducing new university programmes in order to ensure sustainable growth	1. Draft proposal for the incorporation of the component into university costing formulae in respect of new programmes
6. Management	1. Establish working committees to provide a participatory style of management 2. Review existing situation 3. Develop an organogram clarifying communication and reporting relationships	1. Identify key library functions and draft terms of reference for establishing representative working committees 2. Develop, implement and monitor annual plans to guide library information service delivery 3. Review the existing organogram 4. Draft revised organogram
7. Human resource development	1. Develop a training programme	1. Carry out a training needs analysis 2. Provide a training programme

8. Preservation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secure funds for the installation of library environmental monitoring systems 2. Establish a position of binder 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seek funding for implementation of preservation programme 2. Draft and submit proposal for establishment of position of binder
9. Marketing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and implement a library marketing plan 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review existing situation 2. Draft and adopt marketing plan proposal 3. Implement plan
10. Information service delivery	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop user education programmes for both students and staff 2. Conduct periodic surveys on user information needs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement programme (immediate and ongoing) 2. Conduct survey

Table 1. 2000/1–2005/6 UNISWA Strategic Plan.

Subscription-based resources	Open access and free resources
EBSCOhost	BioMed Central
Geographic Publications online (bibliographic database)	California Digital Library e-Scholarship Edition (400+ electronic books)
LexisNexis Law Library	Directory of Open Access Journals
SA e-Publications	Find Articles (more than 10 million articles)
SwetsWise	Free Online Journals
The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEAL)	Geography, Environment and Planning Information Gateway
World Bank e-Library	HighWire Press Free Full Text Articles
World Development Indicators and Global Development Finance	A Guide to Africa on the Internet
	International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP): Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERI)
	OAIster (Harvester for Open Access Repositories)
	Subject Gateways
	UAICT-Africa [Use and Application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Education and Information Provision in Africa]

Table 2. Access to electronic databases.

Physical Infrastructure

Besides the upgrading and extension of the Luyengo agricultural campus library in 2001, the multimedia service experienced considerable modernization, giving library users access to such facilities as CD/DVD writing, digital photographing/recording, scanning and lamination. The downside is that the acquisition of multimedia technology was not accompanied by corresponding changes to the physical space housing the service at Kwaluseni. Although considerable planning work had been done by 2006 regarding the upgrading of the Mbabane library and the creation of a resource centre to accommodate the multimedia service at Kwaluseni, the two facilities continued to experience capacity problems.

Policies and Procedures

The plans to consolidate and compile a policy and procedure handbook for the library and the university and update the status of the library to reflect more clearly its function and relative importance within the university structures did not materialize. However, the production of an external library membership policy and its inclusion in the UNISWA calendar 2005/2006 (University of Swaziland, 2005), and a policy relating to the use of the library during vacation by students, represented a significant policy initiative and an openness in keeping with current trends towards the widening of access to information.

Collaboration

The strategic plan envisaged the establishment of links with relevant regional and international consortia to facilitate information and skills sharing and in the process enable UNISWA users to access quality information resources beyond the borders of Swaziland. The strategy was superseded by local initiatives. Instead, focus was put on building a national consortium. In July 2006, a workshop to kick-start the formation of a consortium was held with funding from the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) and the assistance of a facilitator from Lesotho, where similar work had been going on. The outcome was a working committee comprising representatives from the Swaziland National Library Service (SNLS), UNISWA, Director of the Curriculum Center and Principal of Ngwane Teacher Training College. The committee was tasked with the responsibility of producing a constitution, a memorandum of

understanding and registering the consortium. Neither the formation of the national consortium nor linkages with regional and international consortia was achieved at the end of 2006.

Funding

During the period, 2000/1–2005/6, new programmes, such as the MSc in Environmental Resource Management, were introduced. In 2006, various diplomas were upgraded to create the following degree programmes: Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness Management, Bachelor of Science in Agronomy, Bachelor of Science in Animal Science, Bachelor of Science in Food Science, Nutrition and Technology, Bachelor of Science in Horticulture, Bachelor of Science in Land and Water Management, and Bachelor of Science in Textile and Apparel Design and Management. The library budget allocations were not commensurate with the information resource demands of the new degree programmes. More importantly, the drafting of a proposal for the incorporation of the library component into university costing formulae in respect of new programmes was not completed. Thus, in the absence of this important enabling instrument, library funding allocations continued to fall short of requirements to make available quality library services to support new programmes introduced to meet Swaziland's changing skills needs. Table 3 shows the funding shortfalls over the strategic plan period.

Management

The reconstitution of the Library Strategic Planning Sub-Committee (LSPSC) as the Libraries Strategic Planning Implementation Sub-Committee (LSPISC) and the envisaged formation of sub-committees to lead the implementation of the various strategies were important decisions taken when the strategic plan was adopted. In essence, only the LSPISC was functional. It met irregularly and its reports were erratic. As a result, annual reports did not sufficiently address the progress towards modernization of services as laid out in the strategic plan. Also, the organizational structure remained unchanged. All the same, the LSPISC served to provide a forum for keeping the pressure on and for reviewing the attainment of strategic plan benchmarks.

Notwithstanding the difficulties, a related and milestone development in the promotion of a

Year	Estimate (SZL)	Annual allocation (SZL)	Shortfall (SZL)
2000/2001	7,303,000	1,518,000	5,785,000
2001/2002	7,321,000	960,000	6,361,000
2002/2003	7,575,000	960,000	6,615,000
2003/2004	8,232,000	3,011,815	5,220,185
2004/2005	8,983,500	4,001,439	4,982,061
2005/2006	9,290,568	5,625,140	3,665,428
2000/01-2005/06	48,705,068	16,076,394	32,628,674

Table 3. Library Funding 2000/2001-2005/2006.

Note: SZL = Swaziland Lilangeni: USD 1.00 = SZL 7.2.

participatory style of management was the re-constitution of the Senate Library Committee to include all Library academic staff in its meetings since October 2005. Previously, only the University Librarian, the Deputy University Librarian and two Senior Assistant Librarians were members of the Senate Library Committee.

Human Resources Development

Neither a formal training needs analysis nor a training programme was carried out or developed. At the same time, there remained a persistent recognition that staff needed re-skilling in order adequately to perform their duties in the rapidly changing information service delivery environment. In light of this, three trainee librarians were appointed in 2003, two of whom were seconded for professional LIS training. Also, in-house vendor-provided staff training was done on such resources as Urica, EBSCO, Sabinet, and LexisNexis Law Library. Equally important, members of staff were afforded opportunities to attend workshops, seminars and conferences. UNISWA benefited from a number of programmes, notable examples of which are shown in Table 4.

Preservation

A notable achievement was the establishment of the position of binder. The position was subsequently filled in 2006. Meanwhile, the compilation, publication and distribution of the Swaziland National Bibliography (SNB) enjoyed an uninterrupted budget allocation at least up to the production of the 2004 issue. On the other hand, the installation of environmental monitoring systems to help control the fluctuations characterizing

the library humidity and temperature did not materialize. This left the invaluable Swaziana materials exposed to physical and environmental degradation. The ongoing project to microfilm newspapers and seminal works did not proceed beyond 2003. Initial experiments at harnessing and digitizing public domain Swaziana materials using the Greenstone software did not last long. While the SNB experienced a period of sustained continuity from 1994 to 2004 and similar efforts at documenting the national heritage were realized through the compilation of the Swazi culture bibliography (Muswazi and Magagula, 2003), the SNB became dormant after the 2004 issue.

Marketing

A marketing plan adopted in 1996 was not sufficiently followed through. The strategic plan was an opportunity to update and consolidate the plan, but this did not take place. Following the adoption of the strategic plan, a marketing committee was constituted but could barely convene. Thus, in the absence of a focused marketing committee structure and a master plan, efforts at marketing information resources and services were splintered and included some user education programmes offered to both students and staff, especially: (i) first year orientation sessions, (ii) information literacy sessions for the Geography Research Methods class (GEP 323), and (iii) academic and administrative staff orientation sessions held at the beginning of the academic year around August and September.

Information Services Delivery

Similar to the marketing strategy, user information needs surveys were not system wide and consisted

Venue	Dates	Coverage	Skills/knowledge sharing
University of Namibia, Lund University and University of Botswana	2001–2003	Continuing education: libraries and the Internet (Lund University, 2001a; 2001b) project (2001) – provided training in structured Internet searching, selection and evaluation of Internet information and development of library web pages and subject based information gateways	Library academic staff meeting report back sessions; collaborative development and provision of access to the Geography, Environment and Planning Information Gateway (GEPiG) (Muswazi, 2002b) and the subject portal, Use and Application of ICT in Education and Information Provision in Africa (UAICT-Africa) (2003); revisions to the web pages; sharing of HTML skills; and library academic staff refresher workshop on searching the web, September, 2003, Kwaluseni Campus
University of Cape Town	September 2003	Using Internet to research foreign and international law. Covered South African, UK, Australian and New Zealand, Canadian, European Union, United Nations documents and the United States Law	Library academic staff meeting report back session. Enhanced use of SA e-Publications and LexisNexis when these databases became available
Malawi, Lilongwe	May 2004	Programme for Agricultural Information Services, Southern Africa: identifying stakeholders for question and answer (QA) services in participating countries and develop regional QA collaboration. Objective: improve availability and access to agricultural information	Library academic staff meeting report back session. Service established and offered by Faculty of Agriculture and is channelled through Orange Free State in South Africa
Dakar, Senegal	September 2004	Electronic publishing and dissemination: access and visibility of African scholarship, electronic thesis, digital libraries, and digitizing for academic outreach	Library academic staff meeting report back session. Digitizing UNISWA past examination papers
Nairobi, Kenya	February 2006	Digital commons: free and open source software and content	Library academic staff meeting report back session
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	March 2006	World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) follow-up Conference on Access of Information and Knowledge for Development	Library academic staff meeting report back session

Harare, Zimbabwe	April 2006	Open Access and Creating a Knowledge Society: Local content on the Internet, institutional repositories, and international developments in intellectual property rights	Library academic staff meeting report back session
Pretoria, South Africa	July 2006	Integrated Approach to e-Content – structure and standards: electronic resource management, linking, federated searching and library statistics; included vendor exhibitions	Library academic staff meeting report back session
Leiden, Netherlands	September 2006	Electronic Publishing and Dissemination (follow up to 2004 Dakar workshop): effects of ICT on scholarly communication, bibliometric citations, publishing models for Africa and academic knowledge for development in Africa	Library academic staff meeting report back session.
Maseru, Lesotho	October 2006	AGORA/HINARI Training of Trainers. Effective use of AGORA, HINARI and TEAL (search strategies) databases, the Internet and electronic library resources	Library academic staff meeting report-back session. Library sourcing funds to acquire AGORA database
Kampala, Uganda	November 2006	eIFL-IP Advocacy for access to knowledge – copyright and related issues: Copyright laws, international agreements vis à vis copyright and access to information in developing countries; need to develop national copyright strategic plan African Copyright Form Conference: focused on issues of copyright in Africa and their effects on access to information	Library academic staff meeting report back session

Table 4. Participation in human resource development programmes.

of isolated efforts, namely: (i) the Luyengo campus library developed and administered user information needs survey instruments to guide services at the campus (Phiri, 2004), and (ii) Kwaluseni based surveys relating to the needs of distance education users (Muswazi, 2003), electronic resources and services needs survey (Muswazi, 2005) and the GEPIG survey conducted with the 2001/2002 GEP 323 class. LIS statistics are collected annually but they are not subjected to a formalized and systematic interpretation to establish the strategic implications. The few user education and Internet use sessions carried out for students and members of academic staff every now and again are not conducted within the framework of a sufficiently structured programme.

Factors Influencing the Implementation of the Plan: Observations

Opportunities

Although limited, favourable conditions for the successful implementation of some elements of the strategic plan existed, particularly the information technology, collaboration and human resources development strategies.

Information technology

The basic infrastructure for the modernization of services was in place by 2000. UNISWA had a relatively reasonable supply of personal computers (PCs), CD-ROM and EBSCOHost databases, Internet access and information technology skills. Suber (2006) defines open access (OA) literature as "digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions". In many respects, the ever-increasing abundance of OA literature is undoubtedly a boon to under-funded libraries like UNISWA, enabling them to facilitate user access to quality scholarly resources without the financial hardships that come with accessing subscription-based databases. Coupled with the harnessing of quality resources from the rich deep web, participation in the World Bank depository programme and initiatives such as the INASP Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (International Availability of Scientific Publications, 2007), which support capacity building in the research sector in developing and transitional countries by strengthening the production, access and dissemination of information and knowledge, UNISWA users are able to tap into a wider base of electronic information

resources relatively comparable to what other modern library services provide.

Collaboration

Among other things, the overarching goal of the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) (2007) is to promote access to information in Southern Africa. To this end, it has supported libraries in building consortia to realize economies of scale. OSISA availed UNISWA and Swaziland of the opportunity to implement a scaled-down collaboration strategy and enable users at least to optimize access to, and utilization of, national information resources and services.

Human resources development

LIS international partners recognize the importance of up-to-date skills and knowledge. They sponsor numerous workshops, seminars and conferences to enable librarians in both developed and developing countries to share skills and knowledge. Some of the active partners are the Commonwealth, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), International Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP), the Free and Open Source Software Foundation for Africa, Fulbright, the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA), Electronic Information for Libraries (eIFL.net), Information Training and Outreach Centre for Africa (ITOCA), the South African Site Licensing Initiative (SASLI), the Starr Foundation, the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. UNISWA has benefited from the generosity of these international partners and made considerable progress towards meeting the objectives of the human resources development strategy.

UNISWA capitalized on all opportunities available. On balance, however, the modernization of library services was slowed down by numerous challenges that cut across virtually all the ten identified strategies.

Challenges

The key challenges faced in executing the 2000/1–2005/6 strategic plan are:

Information technology

The general challenges in implementing the information technology strategy are comprehensively documented in a study carried out by Muswazi (2005). Additionally, the recurring threats to adequate funding to sustain subscriptions to resources and services such as EBSCO, LexisNexis, Sabinet and TEAL are a persistent problem. Similarly, limited web documentation frustrates efforts at building local content portals, hence very little progress in deploying a Swaziana portal. Overall, the limited number of PCs available at library computer laboratories of Kwaluseni (10) and Luyengo (8) frustrates user access to the Internet/e-resources.

Physical infrastructure

The upgrading of the Mbabane library cannot proceed in isolation. It is part of a wider master plan to upgrade the health sciences campus. The library has to fit in with the broader time frames.

Policies and procedures

The development of a university policy and procedure handbook is a collaborative effort between the library, faculties and administration. This requires central coordination without which the library has little leeway. This applies equally to other instruments such as a training policy and others necessary to streamline operations. Yet, the university central administration works with competing priorities and the development of policies and procedures is only one, among many.

Collaboration

There are marked discrepancies in the distribution of resources, information and communication technology infrastructure, skills and knowledge among the potential members of the proposed Swaziland library services consortium, with UNISWA being relatively well off compared to others. Negotiating the nature and form the consortium would assume, taking into consideration the differences, is a long drawn out process that frustrates UNISWA's strategic direction in this regard. Because of the geographically small size of Swaziland and the proportionally constrained membership base, the opportunities of making savings through joint purchases may be hard to come by. On the other hand, it is these same factors that justify the pooling of resources to ensure

that Swaziland users enjoy access to modern LIS. The predicament requires careful consideration to establish a model that would best suit Swaziland's unique circumstances.

Funding

Funding is a crosscutting issue. While most benchmarks had a budget allocation, limited funding renders this virtually impracticable in terms of day-to-day strategic operations. Coupled with other challenges, most strategies were negatively affected by lack of adequate funding. The estimated total budget over the strategic plan period 2000/1–2005/6 was SZL48 705 068,00. The actual total allocation was SZL16,076,394.00 (i.e. only 33 percent of the estimated total implementation cost), giving a total shortfall of SZL32,628,674.00.

Management

Information on the performance of the library with regard to the strategies was neither systematically disseminated nor readily accessible to all members of staff. Generally, the strategic plan reports did not circulate to all library academic staff outside the LSPISC membership. In addition, potential working committees to provide a participatory style of management were identified. At the end of 2006, the LSPISC had not yet finalized the composition of the committees. In the circumstances, the information and knowledge vacuum poses a challenge to the motivation of all staff members to stay focused on the attainment of the strategic objectives.

Human resources development

A potential pool of trainees is available within the library system. However, lack of clearly articulated training policies and procedures detracts from developing this cadre to fill in the skills and knowledge needs required to provide modern library services. Swaziland does not have a library school and UNISWA relies on outside library schools. Yet, funding and scholarships awards for complete professional LIS training programmes are scarce.

Preservation

One of the most significant challenges to the preservation strategy is professional staff turnover at UNISWA and scarcity of appropriate skills on the market. The microfilming of seminal works

necessitates lengthy lead times to comply with cumbersome copyright clearance procedures. The newspaper collection is small and it makes economic sense to microfilm every two years. The frustrating lead times taken together with staffing challenges constitute a major hurdle to the accomplishment of the preservation objectives.

Marketing

For a long time, a large number of academic staff did not use the library, even in the wake of appreciable developments in terms of information and communication technology infrastructure and the availability of e-resources. This is because of the not-so-positive perceptions they developed towards the library over the years. Changing these perceptions is a challenge which will require aggressive marketing strategies.

Information service delivery

The effectiveness of information service delivery is dependent to a greater extent upon the quality of personnel operating the system and providing the service. The availability of specialized staff is of crucial importance. Critical strategic areas of operation, such as preservation, were affected by inadequacies in re-skilling initiatives.

Conclusion

The UNISWA strategic plan 2000/1–2005/6 was a multi-pronged approach to modernize library and information services. The strategy focused on information technology, policies and procedures, collaboration, funding, management, human resources development, preservation, marketing and information service delivery. UNISWA seized the opportunities available and made considerable progress in implementing the information technology and human resource re-skilling strategies. In particular staff harnessed, and users enjoyed, widened access to quality electronic resources – one of the hallmarks of knowledge age library services. However, this fell short of the overall systemic changes envisaged in the strategic plan. Inadequate funding, limited local content on the web, inadequate information and communication technology infrastructure, scarce professional skills, and restrictive policies and procedures were recurring challenges.

To the extent that available professional members of staff possess the required basic skills and knowledge and that library users have a comparatively wider access to scholarly resources, the strategic plan transformed UNISWA library services and laid the groundwork for ongoing development. Further work revolving around continued harnessing of information technology, policies and procedures, collaboration, funding, management, preservation, marketing and information service delivery is essential to the process of deepening the modernization of services. The centrality of the user should pervade all interventions, especially the development of information literacy and life long learning programmes that empower users to function independently and effectively in the modern information and knowledge society.

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About the Authors

Paiki Muswazi is presently Deputy Client Services Librarian, University of the Witwatersrand Library (Wits), Johannesburg, South Africa. Among some of his previous positions, he was Senior Librarian (Education & Training) at Wits, Special Collections Librarian, University of Swaziland Library, Kwaluseni, Swaziland, Chief Executive's Assistant, Zimbabwe

Electricity Supply Authority, Harare, Zimbabwe, and Librarian/Archivist, National Archives of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe. He holds an MLIS from Simmons College, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, Boston, Massachusetts, USA, a BA Hons from University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe, Diplomas in Personnel and Training Management, Institute of Personnel Management (IPM), Harare, Zimbabwe, and the International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL), from the ICDL Foundation, Cape Town, South Africa. He may be contacted at University of the Witwatersrand Library, Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, South Africa or E-mail Paikim@library.wits.ac.za or Pmuswazi@yahoo.com

Dickson Yumba is in charge of the Law Collection at the University of Swaziland Library. Previously he worked at the University of Zambia in various departments of the Library. He received a BA degree in Library Studies and African Development Studies from the University of Zambia and an MSc in information Science from Addis Ababa University. His areas of interest include user education, marketing and digitization. He can be reached at: University of Swaziland, Private Bag 4, Kwaluseni, Swaziland. E-mail: dyumba@uniswacc.uniswa.sz or dymba@gmail.com