



Kenya national Library service(knls)

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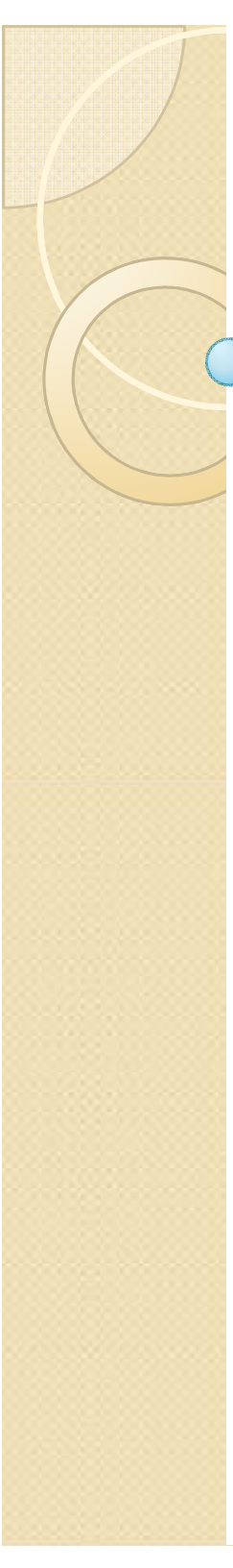
Promoting accessible information in public libraries: Kenya national library service to the blind

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Atman Chiti

Kenya national library service is a corporate body of the Kenya government established by an Act of parliament Cap 225(1965) to provide library and information services to the Kenyan Public. Our customers cover the entire public and includes

- Students
- Children
- Youth
- Researchers
- Government agencies
- Private institutions
- Pensioners
- Prisons
- Hospitals and hospices
- Orphanages
- Persons with disabilities



**Our mission
to make information resources
available and preserve national
imprint for use by all
communities through utilization
of appropriate technology**



Our core functions

- To promote, develop, establish, equip ,manage ,and maintain libraries in Kenya
- To maintain the national bibliographical control through publication of national bibliography and Kenya periodical directory.
- To promote information literacy and reading among Kenyans
- To enhance stake holders participation for equitable development of libraries throughout the country
- To advise government .local authorities and other public bodies on all matters relating to libraries ,documentation and elated services

Our services

- Adult ,junior, institutional lending
- 57 branches countrywide
- Advisory library services
- Technical assistance on library development
- Internet services
- Interlibrary lending
- Health information
- Agricultural information(NAFIS)
- Services to visually impaired persons through braille corners
- User education
- Mobile(motorised and non-motorised)

Services to the visually impaired persons(VIPs)

As an equal services provider, knls, introduced services to the blind in October 1996. This service targets totally blind, low visioned and the senior citizens. This is in line with the Bill of Rights in our constitution which advocates for right to information and the provision under vision 2030. Knls believes in empowering the challenged persons to enable them join other Kenyans in national development



Specific services

- Lending information materials to the vips
- Basic counselling to the newly blinded persons
- Basic braille instructions to newly blinded users



continued

- Referral services to relevant institutions for either medication or rehabilitation
- Basic mobility and orientation skills to library users
- Basic awareness creation to staff and the public on the needs of vips.
- Outreach library service to institutions and homebound users

Available information resources

- Computers with assistive audio software eg JAWS
- Perkins Brailers
- Audio cassette players
- CCTVs for the low visioned
- Talking books.
- Braille books
- Audio navigators

challenges

- Provisions of copyright law which restrict production of original materials in alternative format without permission of the author
 - High cost of acquiring VIPs information materials eg. Jaws software license for one computer costs ksh 200,000. Mobilespeak software used in cell phones is unaffordable to the vips. Furthermore cheap phones are not compatible to the software
 - Expensive mobility devices eg white cane. This restricts many users from accessing information points.
 - Negative attitude towards vips.
 - Physical barriers to information eg. lack of Braille marking and guides
 - Lack of supportive policies
 - Linguistic challenge to basic learners in the available software
 - Locating and accessing the potential vis

Way forward

Authors should allow blanket copyright permission on information materials meant for vi use.

Duty waiver on all vi information materials

- Government to consider non profit tax incentives to organizations that provide services to vi eg digitization and accessing online books
- Media houses to ensure the print edition are available in audio format
- Stakeholders and the media to deliberately mount civic education on the information needs of vis
- Enhance the provisions of the constitution on accessibility.
- Software developers to come up with software compatible with the local languages.
- Government to conduct exclusive census on all vis to enable provision of data for the purposes of planning for information provision
- KNLS invites partnership with other government agencies and stakeholders in this noble duty of uplifting the challenged members of the society



conclusion

As the country devolves to the counties, web accessibility to the vips is crucial. It is imperative that all members of the society travel together in shaping up the counties

Thankyou