KNLS | kenya national library service
Read. Know. Empower

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Festive Cheer and Season's Greetings

In this season of celebration, the Kenya National Library Service (KNLS) extends warm Season's Greetings to our cherished patrons, partners, and stakeholders. As we reflect on the past year, our mission to foster knowledge and inspire communities remains steadfast. The library, a vibrant space for exploration and growth, continues to be a cornerstone of accessible education and cultural exchange.

Looking back on 2023, our vision of empowering minds and enriching lives propels us forward. This festive season, we express gratitude for the collective efforts that have made our libraries dynamic hubs of learning. As we exchange wishes for joy and prosperity, we carry the spirit of knowledge and community into the new year, where together, we will continue to make a positive impact.

Year-End Reflections: Staff Breakfast Meeting Highlights

On the 13th of December 2023, KNLS embraced the spirit of reflection and celebration with a remarkable Staff Breakfast Meeting, culminating in a memorable year-end gathering. Esteemed guests, including Ms. Ummi Bashir, PS of the State Department for Culture, the Arts & Heritage, joined us in commemorating the collective achievements of the year.

The Board Chairman and CEO took a moment to express sincere congratulations to our dedicated staff for their unwavering commitment and hard work. "As we mark the conclusion of the year, let's reflect on our achievements, lessons learned, and the collective growth we've experienced. Each challenge has been an opportunity for us to learn, adapt, and emerge stronger. Here's to a year characterized by resilience and success!" emphasized CEO Dr. Charles Nzivo.

This insightful gathering also provided a platform for CEO Dr. Nzivo to present the year's scorecard, offering a comprehensive review of 2023—a year marked by notable achievements and the continuous growth of the KNLS community. As we bid farewell to 2023, the Staff Breakfast Meeting stands as a testament to our collective dedication and the positive strides made throughout the year.

Literary Triumphs: Mashujaa Reading Challenge Awards in partnership with World Reader

In a literary spectacle organized on December 2nd, the Kenya National Library Services (KNLS) played host to the Mashujaa Wa Kusoma celebrations at its Maktaba Kuu headquarters in Nairobi. A gathering that brought together over 150 children and their parents, the event marked a vibrant tribute to the power of reading.

Aligned with the spirit of Mashujaa Day, the celebration aimed to inspire Kenyan children to embark on the challenge of reading 25 books within a month. Ms. Philemona Mwirigi, the Director of Acquisition and Distribution at KNLS, underscored the significance of launching this reading campaign on Mashujaa Day, paying homage to the heroes pivotal in Kenya's independence.

The Mashujaa Reading Challenge, a collaborative venture between KNLS and Worldreader, witnessed the triumphant participation of over 50 children, guided by the resources of BookSmart—a free digital library boasting an extensive collection of over 3,000 books.

Beyond individual achievements, the momentum of the Mashujaa Reading Challenge rippled through families, fostering collective enthusiasm and promoting literacy comprehension and completion. In line with KNLS's commitment to national literacy, 300 books were generously donated to each participating student and parent, sowing the seeds of a lasting love for reading.

The celebratory ceremony saw parents, caregivers, and children lauded and awarded for their unwavering dedication to literacy. Distinguished guests, including Colin McElwee, co-founder and senior director of strategic partnerships at Worldreader, dignitaries from KNLS, and Worldreader's board of directors, added a touch of prestige to the occasion.

Accolades such as t-shirts and clocks were presented to winners, with the overall champion receiving a coveted trophy. Ms. Mwirigi, in her closing remarks, urged all to tap into the abundant resources within the library, fostering a nationwide reading culture. She encouraged parents to frequent libraries, set reading challenges, and excitingly announced that this event, spearheaded by Worldreader, would become an annual tradition. Additionally, a parent-child club is set to convene every second Saturday of the month at KNLS Maktaba Kuu, creating a continuous literary legacy.

2023 Review: Highlights and Achievements

Launch of the Virtual Library dubbed "vtabu"

On 12th July 2023, we launched the virtual library dubbed vtabu which was officiated by the Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Youth Affairs, the Arts and Sports, Hon. Ababu Namwamba. The launch of the virtual library, signifies a significant step forward in promoting knowledge-sharing and access to information. Spearheaded by the Kenya National Library Service (KNLS) and supported by various government entities, this innovative initiative is expected to revolutionize the way people in Kenya and beyond access and engage with information. VTabu offers a diverse and extensive collection of resources, including over 200,000 digitized books, periodicals, research papers, government publications, and more.

This vast platform of knowledge can be accessed from any internet-enabled device, making it convenient for users to explore and learn from various sources. The inclusion of downloadable e-books for offline reading addresses the issue of limited internet connectivity in some areas, making information more accessible to a wider audience.

At the launch event held at Maktaba Kuu in Nairobi, Youth Affairs, the Arts and Sports, Cabinet Secretary Hon. Ababu Namwamba highlighted the importance of technology and innovation in promoting knowledge growth. He expressed optimism that VTabu would not only enhance Kenya's global competitiveness but also contribute to economic growth by creating job opportunities related to content generation. The virtual library is expected to play a crucial role in supporting young learners through its Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) materials, helping them identify and nurture their talents for future career opportunities.

One noteworthy aspect of vtabu is the Talanta Hela initiative, which aims to promote youth creativity and talents. This initiative provides a platform for young writers to monetize their literary works, encouraging the growth of creative industries in Kenya. The virtual library's information materials cater to learners of all ages and interests, covering a wide range of subjects such as children's content, general information e-books, fiction, non-fiction, journals, storybooks, cartoons, photography, wildlife, tourism, culture, science, information technology, and CBC education materials. Access to the virtual library (vtabu) requires a nominal daily membership fee of Sh20, which offers flexible subscription options to accommodate various preferences and needs. During the launch, President William Ruto's speech read by the CS declared July 12 as the annual national reading day. This underscores the government's commitment to fostering reading habits and utilizing the vtabu platform to facilitate personal and academic growth. Dr. Charles Nzivo, the CEO of KNLS, extended an invitation to state agencies and organizations to utilize KNLS's data facility for cloud storage services and the KNLS Digitization Hub for digitizing important documents, pictures, and maps. The KNLS digital platform also provides on-demand digital skills training in areas such as coding, digital marketing, graphic design, and ICT skills, empowering young Kenyans to explore online job opportunities.

Establishment of a Data Centre

In a pioneering move towards digital advancement, the Kenya National Library Service (KNLS) has achieved a momentous feat with the establishment of its cutting-edge Data Center. This monumental initiative not only safeguards KNLS's digital information assets but also expands its capabilities to offer secure cloud services, redefining the organization's digital presence.

The establishment of the Data Center goes beyond being a technological upgrade; it reflects KNLS's dedication to innovation. The facility is not just a storage hub; it's a dynamic space where ideas flourish, and technology is fully utilized. It embodies KNLS's commitment not only to keeping abreast of technological advancements but also to leading the way in shaping the future of information services.

Embracing the evolution of computing, KNLS, through its Data Center, introduces a range of cloud services tailored to meet evolving organizational needs. Virtual Private Servers provide secure and flexible computing resources, fostering efficient data processing and application hosting within a virtualized space. Storage as a Service ensures scalable and reliable storage solutions, facilitating the seamless expansion of digital repositories without the limitations of infrastructure.

Taking innovation to the next level, KNLS extends its services into the cloud with Software as a Service. This offering includes cloud-based solutions such as a Library Management System, Knowledge Management System, and e-Learning System, streamlining operations and enhancing accessibility for users.

As the Data Center assumes a central role in KNLS's digital landscape, the organization is positioned for a future where information is not only securely stored but also easily accessible and innovatively utilized. The establishment of this state-of-the-art facility signifies a significant milestone in KNLS's journey towards technological excellence, paving the way for a digitally empowered future.

Establishment of a Digitization Lab

The Kenya National Library Service (KNLS) has established a digitization lab to digitize rare content including rare books, maps, and newspapers. The digitization lab aims to preserve and make available to the public rare and valuable content that would otherwise be inaccessible due to its fragile nature. In addition to digitizing KNLS's own collections, the digitization lab is open to the public, allowing individuals and organizations to digitize their own content at an affordable fee. This technical summary outlines the digitization process at KNLS, how to access the digitization lab, and the benefits of having the digitization lab.

The digitization process at KNLS involves several steps: selection of content, registration, scanning, and quality control. The selection process involves identifying rare and valuable books, maps, and newspapers that need to be digitized. Once the content has been selected, it is registered, and the digitization process can begin. The registration process captures important metadata such as the author, title, publisher, and publication date, which is used to create a catalog of the digitized content. The next step is scanning, which involves capturing digital images of the selected material using high-resolution scanners equipped with specialized software that corrects for distortions caused by the curvature of the book's pages. Quality control is then performed to ensure that the digital images are of the highest quality, and the digitized content is made available to the public on the KNLS virtual library.

One of the key value additions of digitizing content is the ability to make the text searchable using OCR technology. OCR stands for Optical Character Recognition, and it is a technology that allows computers to recognize text in digital images. This means that users of the KNLS virtual library can search for specific words or phrases within the digitized content.

The OCR process involves converting the digital images of the material into machine-readable text. This is done using specialized OCR software that recognizes the text in the digital images and converts it into searchable text. Once the text has been extracted, it is indexed, and users can search for specific words or phrases within the digitized content.

The digitization lab at KNLS is open to the public, and individuals and organizations can digitize their own content at an affordable fee. To access the digitization lab, individuals and organizations need to contact KNLS to schedule an appointment. Once the appointment is scheduled, the individual or organization can bring their content to the digitization lab, where it will be digitized by KNLS staff. The digitized content will be made available to the individual or organization, and they will retain ownership of the original material.

There are several benefits of having a digitization lab at KNLS. Firstly, the digitization lab helps to preserve rare and valuable content that would otherwise be inaccessible due to its fragile nature. By digitizing the content, it can be accessed by a wider audience, reducing the wear and tear on the original material. Secondly, the digitization lab makes rare and valuable content available to the public, allowing researchers, scholars, and members of the public to access information that would otherwise be difficult to find. Thirdly, the digitization lab helps to bridge the digital divide by making digital technology and services available to the public. Lastly, the digitization lab provides an opportunity for individuals and organizations to digitize their own content at an affordable fee, allowing them to preserve and share their own unique collections.

A total of 93 maps and 10 artworks have been scanned and documented. Additionally, 1318 rare books from the Netherlands (NLD) comprising 375,978 pages, as well as 1139 records with a total of 20,414 pages, have been included in the documentation. However, there are no scanned newspapers in the current collection.