A Case Study of the University Library in Mekelle, Ethiopia

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Introduction

This thesis will focus on the University Library in Mekelle, Ethiopia and its interaction with the users at the university. One of the intentions with this study is to shed some light on library and information issues in a developing country.

Ethiopia is one of the countries that suffers from the highest rates of poverty in the world. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) donates a great deal of money to the country.\(^1\) One of the main concerns in fighting poverty and working for a positive development of a country is to improve education. When considering sustainable development of a country, education is usually mentioned as one of the main foundations. Within the context of education, libraries can play a vital role.

Support to the education sector has been a major component in development aid and Ethiopia has received a lot of donation to this sector in specific. One of the great donors is among others, the World Bank.\(^2\) The recent expands of the education system have taken place at great speed which also have been brought to attention. Some have pointed out the negative effects of this. A major criticism is that this has been implemented at the cost of the actual quality of education.\(^3\) Libraries have also been affected by this. The case study report *University Libraries in Africa: a review of their current state and future potential*, released in 1997, has pointed at the negative effects of the expansions, such as the fact that the libraries cannot meet some of the basic needs of the growing amount of students.\(^4\)

The university library in the scope of my study is connected to the University in Mekelle (MU) and consists of six libraries. The University was


\(^{3}\) Negash (2006).

established in the year 2000 when two colleges merged. 19,999 students are registered at the university and it is funded by the state. The colleges have been in existence for some time but the current form of a university is quite new and the library can therefore in some aspects be described as being in an initial stage.

The idea of this study is to describe a university library and its current state, such as the conditions it is working under and how the users in turn perceive the library. It will be of a descriptive kind and be related to the context it is situated in and therefore the study will take the form of a case study.

Purpose

The main purpose of this thesis is to illuminate how the Mekelle University Library (MUL) is constructed and how it is experienced from the view of its users, i.e. the students and academic staff.

The study also aims at demonstrating the relation between library and education and therefore the study will be put in this context. The main questions of this study to reach its purpose are:

- How do the users experience the library, is their information need being met?
- How does the university and library interact, what kind of resources are the library given? And with this in mind,
- How is the library responding to its mission statement and goals according to the users’ point of view?

In order to try and find answers to these questions the experiences among the users, and to some extent, the experience of the library will be investigated. The library’s resources will be described in order to try to give a complete picture as possible of the library and also to relate it to the users’ information need. The case study will be of a qualitative kind and will, as mentioned, take the form of a case study and therefore take the importance of context into

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5 “Mekelle University Office of the Registrar, From the Beginning Up To 1998 Academic Years, Students Enrolled As Diploma (Regular, Evening, Summer/In-Service & Distance)”, Mekelle University Archive (MUA) in following foot notes

6 Mekelle University/History [http://www.mu.edu.et/muHistory.html](http://www.mu.edu.et/muHistory.html) 2006-09-15
consideration. This will make the chapter containing the literature review and background information rather extensive.

The study will include description of aims, observations and interviews with staff and users. The study is inspired by some of the characteristics of evaluation studies. Evaluation studies about the users’ experiences of a library can by finding out how the users actually use the library and what they think of it, help improve the library’s services. The library studied has never been an object of similar studies. No evaluation reports or studies have been done regarding its relation to its users. Within library and information science evaluation studies are a common mode of procedure. The chapter Framework will offer an overview of the ideas and tools. But first, a background will be given and in connection to this recent research on the situation of African libraries will follow. Libraries can play a vital role in an educational process. In interplay with education they constitute important fundaments for the future development of a country. These are some of the reasons why it is of value to study how a university library is working alongside an institution for education in Ethiopia.

The national perspective is predominant among master’s thesis within Library and Information Science in Sweden. Few studies focus on issues outside of Sweden and the western world. Since this thesis will focus on a library set in a different environment I see this as a reason to construct the literature review as context-oriented towards African library issues.
Literature Review and Background

The literature review aims at giving an idea of the context for my study and therefore it gives a brief review on the state of research on African libraries.

In comparison with research on the western world and its libraries the amount of research dealing with libraries and their future development in Africa is not overwhelming in the same way. As mentioned this thesis will be a case study and therefore the matter of context is important. Therefore the following literature review will offer a broader perspective of the situation of libraries at large in Africa and should be viewed as an attempt to give a background to this thesis. With this said, it still has to be emphasised that university libraries in Africa encounter of course the same problems as western libraries do. Special attention will be directed to the education situation in Ethiopia, as the purpose of this study is to see how the users at a university perceive their library and the users are in their turn of the Ethiopian education system. Therefore a background to this will also be given in the literature review.

Libraries and information in Africa and Ethiopia

The literature review starts with an historical approach and then moves on to more recent findings on the current situation. A piece of work that serves as an important background and as point of reference for my study is the University Libraries in Africa: a review of their current state and future potential with Diana Rosenberg as an editor. I want to mention this piece of work from the start but will give it a closer presentation at the end of this literature review on recent writings on African libraries. My choice of presenting this study in the end is that it offers an idea of a similar context that the University of Mekelle is situated in.

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7 Rosenberg et. al. (1997), University Libraries in Africa: a review of their current state and future potential, vol. 1 summary, p. 3.
Betty Marton gives an outline of the development of African libraries in *Revitalizing African Libraries: the challenge of a quiet crisis*. During the 1950’s libraries were being built in Africa in a greater extent. The main source of finance and assistance came from British and American actors. The libraries therefore undertook a western structure and took little consideration to local demands into account. During the years of independence the libraries received extensive aid but few of these investments are evident today.⁸

Demissew Tsigemela discusses in the paper “Libraries and Librarianship in Ethiopia: Status, Prospects and Challenges” the situation of the Ethiopian libraries and librarianship. He estimates that modern libraries developed in Ethiopia during the 1960’s. Tsigemela points out that Africa is the most deprived area in the world and that information is a field with very low priority. He stresses the importance of professional training and claims that there has been a decline in education of Library and Information Science since the 1990’s. However there has currently been a change as one university has started to train Library and Information professionals. He discusses the importance of establishing professional librarians since this is a key for standardising quality in libraries as libraries are increasing with the growth and development of universities in Ethiopia. Furthermore he mentions the danger if development concerning librarianship in Ethiopia should move in the same direction that many other parts of Africa have done where anyone working in a library can be called a librarian. Training professionals to conduct the work in libraries should be considered with the current growth of libraries.⁹

Let’s return to the situation of libraries in Africa at a whole. In a master’s thesis in Library and Information Science Charlotte Sager and Karin Walterson refers to the article *Resource Mobilisation for Library Information Services Development in Africa*, by the director of the University Library at Dar Es Salaam Elisabeth Kiondo. She divides the African library development into three phases: the 60’s and 70’s meant a fast development of libraries with the help of donors and the governments in question were also supportive with finances. During the 80’s investment declined due to the economic crisis that was prevailing at the time. She describes the 90’s a phase of new investments. A growing amount of donators can be discerned and the launch of new

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technology has taken place.\textsuperscript{10} The question though is the strength of these donations, concerning if the investments and donations aimed at the most needed issues and if there is continuity.

Returning to previously mentioned Betty Marton who furthermore also discusses the current situation of the libraries. She states that libraries, the public libraries in specific, have had difficulties in meeting the demands from their users.\textsuperscript{11} The same fact can be applied to the university libraries. Recent years have involved a decrease in the libraries credibility among its users. This has partly to do with the fact that the libraries have not received enough resources, that there have been difficulties in keeping pace with the technical development and that one hasn’t been able to foresee the demands among the users.\textsuperscript{12} Other than that, other factors have affected the outcome: Poor communication among the libraries and its users, among the libraries and the university administration and among the libraries themselves on a national and as well on an international level. The method of teaching has also changed and there is a prevailing focus on class-room based learning rather than independent research, which has put the function and the services of libraries in the background. The number of students has increased. Dependence on donations and aid is too great since it might undermine the independence of the libraries. The university libraries are thus at risk of becoming more marginalized.\textsuperscript{13}

Most literature about African university libraries and their current situation addresses the strain that these university libraries are working under. A university library is a very expensive product to keep updated with new material. Therefore these institutions have suffered to some extent in Africa due to the increase of poverty.\textsuperscript{14} Issues like this and the libraries’ position as an institution supplying knowledge in society is the focus in Paul Sturges’ and Richard Neil’s book \textit{The Quiet Struggle, Information and Libraries for the People of Africa}. They underline how the libraries have a central position in the struggle for knowledge and information. Their aim is to discuss institutions of information in a comprehensive way and illuminate the actual libraries in a


\textsuperscript{11} Marton (2000), p. 2.

\textsuperscript{12} Rosenberg et. al. (1997), volume 1, 1 sqq.

\textsuperscript{13} Marton (2000), p. 2.

general information context. Libraries can supply information which in turn can be processed into knowledge. Thus, libraries can play a vital part in a context of knowledge.

In a study carried out by Diana Rosenberg a compilation of the present situation at several African university libraries is presented and there is a discussion about the obstacles concerning e-development. Rosenberg’s viewpoint is coloured by the emphasised by the hazard of libraries lagging behind in this area. Through a survey carried out in 2004-2005 she has seen that the libraries have progressed into the establishment of digital library services at different levels at different speed. Thus the specific need of the different libraries differs greatly. In the light of this it is of importance to study different libraries to see what their specific needs are at the moment. Most of the e-resources developments have been financed through external funding, and Rosenberg means that the lack of funding and lack of trained staff is one of the great challenges for the future. In the article “IT and university libraries in Africa” she stresses that the development of IT in Africa does not exclude the need of hard copy books. She illustrates that the prevailing idea among universities is that IT will save them from spending money on material. In the light of these findings it is of interest to see where Mekelle University Library places itself in relation to this.

In the article “An Overview of Recent Library and Information Developments in East Africa” from 1998, Cephos Odini discusses the state of the libraries at the time being. The article is in other words from round about the same period of time as the case study report of African university libraries with Diana Rosenberg as editor which I will present shortly. The article articulates the growing problems with the governments giving the libraries a low priority and refers to the libraries as being in a state of crisis. The parent institutions are not too involved with the actual libraries anymore and many libraries are supported by external resources. The different East African governments have tried to stop the decline of information institutions. International associations have also tried to revive the libraries and information

15 Sturges–Neill (1998), s. 2.
systems. Odini concludes that librarians and library organisations have recognised the need to push for library development. In line with Diana Rosenberg’s article, the future of information and library services in Africa is described with concern and a call for working in their favour. Much of these kind of articles emphasise that there lies a challenge within this area and that a lot of work lies ahead.

In the same vein is Stephen M Mutula in the article “Financing Public Universities in Eastern and Southern Africa: implications for information services”. Recent economic structural changes have put a pressure on the university library to make cut backs in their budgets. Mutula refers to a study that states that many of the university libraries in southern Africa only received four percent of the total institution income. This should be compared with the international figure that is of six percent. The figure serves as an illuminating point of the state libraries are in at the moment. Other more recent writings on the topic of Africa and libraries describe the implementation of the digital era. Within library and information science the information situation of development countries has lately been brought to attention due to the future and present digitalisation. In the article “African Culture and Libraries: the Information Technology Challenge”, Charles O. Omekwu discusses the digitalisation and concludes that comparing the digitalisation and IT revolution in Africa to other more developed countries does not give a too positive image of the situation. One can of course question the intention behind such a comparison but an important aspect is to highlight the current situation in order to create an awareness and make way for solutions. For instance, in the article “Bridging the digital divide through e-governance: A proposal for Africa’s libraries and information centres” Mutula concludes that the implementation of Information Communication Technology (ICT) has in fact still not made a great difference in Africa concerning information seeking. There still is a great gap between the countries in who can utilize the benefits of ICT solutions in a fully functioning way. He states that the major problems have to do with infrastructure such as bandwidth and electricity. This makes information-

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seeking far too slow. Concerning the ideas about that the digitalisation with its faster and easier access might bring along a difference to poor countries Mutula claims it still in many cases is not yet fully implemented.  

Finally, the case study report *University Libraries in Africa: a review of their current state and future potential* (Volume 1, 2 and 3.), released in 1997 and with Diana Rosenberg as an editor, consists of case studies carried out at 18 different university libraries in Africa. One of its objectives is to examine and evaluate the achievements in the different libraries. It covers different areas such as collection and facilities, implementation of ICT, management and economy and the question of donation. This report offers valuable information of university libraries close in time and area to my study. Especially considering an Ethiopian university library. And since it was compiled in 1997 (although the actual studies took place in 1994-1995) it is quite a recent piece of work. I will return to this report in the chapter about methodology since I have found it quite useful concerning my own mode of procedure. It can also be used as a comparison with MU, even though one of course has to take into consideration that they are two completely different institutions, both in terms of at different period of time and environment. However it might still be useful since it deals with the same country and the same type of institution and it also states something about the library’s role in an education system. Therefore a brief compilation on its general meaning about the different cases will follow. I will also finish with a few remarks on what it has to say on the Addis Ababa University Library. This can be helpful to some degree since it is situated in the same country and therefore partly influenced by the same relations as Mekelle university library is working under. Of course numbers of students and collection may differ, another library might have fit that kind of comparative purpose better. Still it is possible to see if there are similarities between the two institutions in order to see if the aspect of time for instance has made any differences between the two of them.

The report shows that the reviewed libraries are at different levels in terms of collection and facilities, on the whole, the situation of most university libraries is described as declining. Periodical subscriptions were noted as holding the worst level for provision and the need for textbooks was dominating the acquisition, making research difficult to carry out.  


libraries were to a high degree dependent on outside support, especially when it came to implementing new technology such as IT. None of the libraries had made any proposal on maintenance and a concluding statement on this topic was “IT alone provides no solution.”

Staffing was not seen as a great problem as it was earlier, now it seemed more to be a case of overstaffing. Within the area of management it was noted that user-centred strategies do not seem to be a top priority. For instance user education was quite absent. There had been no evaluation studies conducted in the manner of performance measurement or top quality. The communication between staff and user was rated as insufficient. Worth mentioning, is that a decentralization could be noted which meant that the departments to a greater extent became more in charge of the information retrieval, creating their own faculty library collections. Librarians are therefore commanded to move with the change and complement the resources. Last but not least the concluding remarks of the study are that the value of libraries is decreasing as an actor in academic activities. Academic staff no longer uses the library. Also, education systems do not speak in favour of independent learning, there is a prevailing system based on lecture notes and repetition. The possible future of the library is not clear but what is stated is that there is still a belief in a strong central library.

The case of the university library in Addis Ababa states that the surveyed period has been rather strained, with war and mistrust between the university and the government. An increase in the number of enrolled students has taken place but equivalent increase among the academic staff could not be seen. The number of students has been increasing. Among postgraduate students and academic staff low levels of satisfaction are noticed. Academic staff relates that they get most of their information from personal contacts overseas and from foreign libraries. Undergraduate students mention the need for study space and access to recommended textbooks. A shortage of multiple copies of textbooks is mentioned. IT is not mentioned as top priority in wanted changes among its users. Rather more and new editions of books are wanted. The amount of spending from the university budget is about four percent. The report claims far too much is spent on staff salaries from the library’s own budget, in one of the

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five investigated years as much as 87 percent is spent on staff.\textsuperscript{31} The report suggests and hopes at local publishing and book sales, since most of the material in the library is produced in the western world, which in the end becomes expensive since everything has to be imported and as well it slows down the acquisition process. This in turn would make work easier and less expensive for the library.\textsuperscript{32} The case of Addis Ababa university shows how the library has lost some of its value, a place where research is declining and where glimpses of the changes of the Ethiopian education system also can be noticed, more enrolments and a system that has moved from independent research to repetition of lecture notes.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the international perspective with focus on developing countries is not dominating Swedish thesis in Library and Information Science. There is on the contrary a prevailing national perspective. There are a handful of thesis within library and information science that have an international focus and draw attention to developing countries from various points of views. One of these partly touches upon the area of my study. It is a case study by Charlotte Sager and Karin Walterson and it focuses on the Makere University Library in Kampala Uganda and the recent implementation of ICT.\textsuperscript{33} The study therefore also deals with an East African country and since it was compiled in 2005, it is of quite a recent date. Its object of study is the automation process at a university library and can therefore be of some support to my study, as it relates to the mentioned IUC programme that is currently taking place at Mekelle University Library and which involves ICT-aspects.

The education situation in Ethiopia, a background

In the discussion paper \textit{Education in Ethiopia, From Crisis to the Brink of Collapse}, the historian Tekeste Negash discusses the state of education in Ethiopia. The aim of the paper is to illuminate that although there has been a great increase in the amount of enrolments in Ethiopia these might not only be viewed as a positive change such as that more people are gaining access to education. The actual situation with the education system is in fact problematic. The obstacles in the education system have increased and it is, according to Negash, on the verge of collapse. The current discourse about education is that

\textsuperscript{32} Rosenberg et al (1997), vol. 2, p. 117.
\textsuperscript{33} Sager–Walterson (2005).
it has a positive effect on the development of society. Negash questions this and criticises the impact in the way that development aid has been handled within the frames of the education system. He points out how a type of westernisation emerges of this situation. In relation to this the importance of what language is used, is discussed.

The prevailing discourse about education seems to be that all form of education is good education, which undermines the actual quality of education itself. The World Bank admits that distress can be seen in the education system and that the current situation is problematic. Although, this seems to be considered as not too much of a problem and that it is something that can be solved through small economic changes. Negash argues that the problem is far greater than that. Several aspects affect the current problem: The situation with a system that contains oversized classes and English as the language of instruction. The teaching staff can hardly themselves handle English as a medium of instruction, the level of English is too poor and this of course affects the learning situation for the student. Yet another factor is that the English language withholds certain frames of values and construction of concepts. English in itself can be said to withhold a western framework of ideas. Thus the western dominance might be reproduced through the use of the English language. Although, there need not be a full “return to the source”- discourse according to Negash. What is suggested is a greater use of the different languages existing in the different regions in Ethiopia and that English should not be excluded, but not be the medium of instruction. 34

Even though a lot of money has been put into the education sector in Ethiopia, the system seems according to this viewpoint, to be at a critical stage. Not only from the viewpoint of Negash, but taking into consideration what the case study from the university library in Addis Ababa discerned, the growing amount of enrolments seems to affect the library to quite an extent.

The different writings on the topic of African libraries describe the current situation as quite serious. The libraries are often described as they are about to face “many challenges”. Some of the literature on the state of African libraries is of an older date, as from the 1980s and 1990s. Little or almost no work considering the current situation of libraries in Ethiopia has been written. To study the information need among the students using the library in the newly established university in Mekelle might contribute to a wider understanding of

the information and library situation on the whole in Ethiopia. The next presentation describes the context and specific settings that the study is carried out in, namely the university itself.

**Mekelle University**

Mekelle University was established when former colleges merged in the year 2000.\(^{35}\) Therefore the university is in an initial phase and in a progress of capacity building. In the academic year 2000/2001 3,974 students were enrolled. Currently 19,999\(^{36}\) students are enrolled, the increase end speed of enrolments has thus been steep. Several universities exist in Ethiopia and the University of Mekelle is situated in the northern part of Ethiopia and one of the more recent established institutions in Ethiopia. It is situated in the part of the country that is close to Eritrea and thus part of a region that suffered from the war with Eritrea in 1998-2000. The region is therefore in a stage of growth and capacity - building. These are several aspects that might be useful to keep in mind when considering the context the university is working within in order to understand the framework that this university in specific is a part of. The amount of students has increased to a great extent since the forming of the university. This is something I will return to in the section where the status of the library is investigated.

The university consists of seven faculties which are basically the following ones: Faculty of Technology, Education, Agriculture, Veterinary, Medicine, Business and Economy and Law. Two faculties run postgraduate studies.\(^{37}\)

The MU Library consists of six different libraries, which basically are related to the different faculties.

1. Technology Faculty Library
2. Education Faculty Library
3. Agricultural, Veterinary and Post Graduate Library
4. Ayder Campus Library (Medicine)
5. Business and Economics Faculty Library

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\(^{36}\) “Mekelle University Office of the Registrar, from the beginning up to now academic years, student enrolled as degree and diploma (regular, evening, summer/in-service & distance). (The year 2000/1 was calculated by adding the amount of enrolments for diplomas with the amount of enrolments for degrees” [1792+2182].). (MUA)

6. Law Faculty Library

The Medical Faculty is called College of Health and Sciences and consists of The Department of Pharmacy and The School of Medicine. The Department of Pharmacy is not connected to the same library as the medical students but they share the same campus with the Medical Faculty. Instead the persons who are connected to the Department of Pharmacy are referred to the Library of Veterinary and Agriculture.

Mekelle University is involved in an institutional university cooperation programme with Katholike University Flandern since 2003 (the IUC programme) and an ICT-project have been linked to this programme. Within this ICT project there has been a focus on the development of the library in Mekelle University. This implementation of the project will be covered to some extent since it has do with the current activities taking place in the scope of the library. Therefore this project will be further described in the first part of the investigation.

The literature review and background chapter has focused on giving an idea of the settings that the library of this study is situated in. It focused on the situation of library, information and education in Africa and Ethiopia in particular. Most literature about the topic underlines the challenges and the strain that university libraries in Africa are working under. It also gave a closer presentation of the University of Mekelle. The following chapter will give the outlines concerning evaluation studies within the sphere of libraries.

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38 “Mekelle University Libraries Five Year Strategic Plan (2007-2011), First Draft”, p. 6. (MUA)
39 “VLIR & Mekelle University Inter-University Partnership Programme 2003-2013” (MUA)
Framework

With the following passage I wish to discuss the framework I intend to use which will evolve into the method for this study.

The elements of evaluation used
As this study will lend elements from evaluation studies it is in the right place to account for some of the literature concerning this area, as well as to discuss definitions of the concepts that will appear. The following section will consist of an overview about what has been written about evaluation studies and libraries. Furthermore the specific elements used for this thesis will be discussed. The literature on this topic usually makes a difference between academic and public libraries and I will focus on material that deals with academic libraries, since this is in line with the object of this thesis.

The purpose of evaluation studies is to illuminate and create an awareness of the activities and functions of a library. There has been a steady increase in material within this field of knowledge since it all saw its first light in the end of the sixties. While browsing through evaluation-related material in library and information science there is a prevailing idea that in order to evaluate libraries one should use a mode of measurement of the libraries. A common concept for evaluations studies is performance measurement. Therefore this will be the concept from where this study will lend some of the ideas of evaluation.

The literature on this topic uses the terms performance measurement and evaluation interchangeably and the concepts are in this way not too clearly defined. Yasmin Mandani discusses this in her master’s thesis in Library and Information Science. She underlines that performance measurement is first and foremost a way of describing the object through certain tools. The outcome of

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this can then in turn be evaluated. Through setting up different indicators of the different actions of the library can be measured through transforming the results into numbers. The indicators can consist of different elements such as speed of interlibrary loan, satisfaction with opening hours, amount of checked out books, available seating etc. These numbers from the indicators can in turn be compared with other libraries results. The measurement made through these set indicators are possible to reuse and therefore measurements over time can be carried out to see changes and development within one library.

Performance measurement includes these methods used for studying a library and its actual functions, but as well it contains aspects of how its users use the library and what they in turn think of its services. To some extent I will use these characteristics in my study to see what the users think of their library. First of all a definition of performance measurement and its accompanying concepts is in its right place. The following definitions derive from an IFLA report published in 1996 which deals with methods for evaluation:

**Performance measurement**: “(…) comparing what a library is doing (performance) with what it is meant to do (mission) and wants to achieve (goals).”

**Performance**: “is the degree to which a library is its objectives, particularly in terms of user’s need.”

**Performance indicator**: “is a quantified statement used to evaluate and compare the performance of a library in achieving its objectives.”

Performance measurement in library and information science has been a topic since the 1960’s. The methods range from being on a theoretical level to a practical one. Some are of a more mathematical character with a focus on statistics. One of the earliest writings on evaluation and libraries is Library

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surveys by Maurice B Line and was first published in 1967. It deals with survey techniques in specific. In the introduction from the 1982 edition, the importance of valid survey methods is discussed. Line claims that survey procedures have become better and that at the time of the first publication they were mostly insufficient. This statement clearly illustrates the increased implementation and usage of surveys in the sphere of Library and Information Science and the increased discussion about them. They have also come to include how the users perceive the library to its actual efficiency and cost efficiency of the library.

Christine Abott is a well known name within writings on evaluation. In *Performance Measurement in Library and Information Services* she discusses that the motives behind performance indicators have been a political one. This in order to encourage greater efficiency and accountability within Public services. Thus, the reasons for carrying out evaluation studies might be as much about wanting to improve the library as to look into if the money invested in it is being well spent.

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), is an independent international organisation which works with library and information-related questions. A central aim of the organisation is to promote high standards of provision and delivery of library and information services. In one of the organisation’s publications, IFLA Publication 76: *Measuring quality, guidelines for performance measurements in Academic Libraries*, this is discussed. The purpose of the report is, to establish some standard guidelines for “University and other General Research Libraries”. These guidelines will to some extent serve as a reference-point for this study and I will shortly discuss these.

In the *Handbok i utvärderingsarbete* four main reasons to points are listed for measuring libraries, which is something I will return to, but my idea is that these reasons at some points very well can be used for explaining the reason to evaluate libraries. Which are the following ones:

1. To investigate what the users think about the library and its services,

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47 IFLANET: About IFLA. Downloaded from [http://www.ifla.org/III/intro00.htm](http://www.ifla.org/III/intro00.htm) 2006-12-01.
2. To investigate how people are using the library
3. To investigate if the line of business is cost effective, how much is spent on the different activities within the library
4. To measure the effectiveness of the inner processes are

The first two points will be taken into consideration in the scope of this study.

The basic idea of the IFLA report on measurement mentioned in the literature review is that performance is measured through viewing the goals and objectives of a library in relation to its users. I have used IFLA’s guidelines as an introduction to this field of knowledge.

The report can be a helpful tool in structuring an evaluation study, since it points out main areas to be taken into consideration. Among other things it contains a list of guidelines for a study. IFLA’s goals with these guidelines are among others to set a standard so that a similar usage within the library can make a historical comparison possible. The list of guidelines can, although said not to be, considered as fixed ones. The list should be open for future changes. Local circumstances will affect measurement.

Research libraries come in all different shapes and sizes and can differ greatly. Thus, the application of IFLA’s guidelines can be done in quite a wide manner. I find this useful since I am not a firm believer in measuring libraries performance like some of the literature on evaluation studies are. Even if IFLA actually state that their aim is to set a standard, my intention is not to set a standard for measuring the library in this study. To discuss the current situation of libraries is one thing, but measuring over time is difficult since everything depends on different time-prevailing contexts and changes. As much as the library as an institution has changed within the last decades there lies a difficulty with viewing its components as fixed ones.

Quality is a recurring expression within evaluation studies and of course the expression can include several definitions. IFLA is in line with many others, viewing quality as more service-orientated concept that include the

49 Edgren et. al. (2005), p. 4.
whole organisational structure, rather than a product-orientated aspect of control and inspection. They state in the report that:

Quality in this sense is fit for purpose; that is to say, a service or product should supply or perform as it is intended to. “The purpose” of a service or product is defined by the customers. Quality in this sense is neither an isolated standard nor the highest standard; it is defined by the needs of the clientele of the individual institution.\textsuperscript{53}

Quality becomes important while discussing a library’s mission statement since the report states that the goal and mission of the library also determines the library’s definition of quality.\textsuperscript{54} This means that a definition of quality is through what the library users think of it in combination with the mission statement of the library. And the purpose of the mission statement is described in the following way: “The mission statement should specify the primary user group whom the library intends to serve and what services are intended to be offered.”\textsuperscript{55} It is thus the framework for the library and can be said to describe in what direction the library is moving. Goals for the library can therefore be developed from this. Goals and mission can in this sense be said to be closely related. According to IFLA the goals must touch upon the following areas in order to accomplish its mission:

- **Collection**, to provide the information to the primary user group, according to its needs
- **Access**, to inform the user about the collection, provide access preferably through open stacks
- **In - House Use**, to provide space for research and study in the library and adequate equipment
- **User Education**, to inform about the services of the library, to assist its users in finding information and to provide reference service
- **Storage and Preservation**, to store material as long as it is relevant for the institution, to provide appropriate housing for the material\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{53} Poll–Boekhorst (1996), p. 11.
\textsuperscript{55} Poll–Boekhorst (1996), p. 13
These are to be included as object of study in an evaluation study. These are also the different major services that libraries usually have to offer, that has a direct effect on the user. Further goals are mentioned in relation to this that are supposed to complement the previous list, these include aspects among other things as cost effectiveness. I chose to use the past listing since it is put forward as central aspects. Therefore these areas will be covered in my studies of the users, as I ask them how much they use the library and in what way they use it. Further the report states that the mission, goals and objectives has to take its customers interests into consideration and therefore a “stakeholder approach” with this is suggested. The approach is suggested to include and consider the following groups:

- The primary user group
- Other users
- Library staff
- The managers of the institution
- All resource allocaters
- Government
- The research community outside the institution
- Cooperating libraries
- And even the society in its broadest sense, including posterity.\textsuperscript{37}

The past passage can be said to conclude that the IFLA standards for measuring quality includes the user to quite an extent. With this approach the library is not alone responsible for the idea of quality within their field of work. The users of the library can be said to constitute the definition of quality as well. Thus, the mission and goals are closely interlinked with the quality at the library according to IFLA.

To sum up the above passage following remarks can be concluded: Most literature on this topic is strikingly uniform. As Abott mentions, there has been a focus on performance indicators and not too much on the managing of their implementation.\textsuperscript{38} The discourse on evaluation studies is quite a homogenous one. The strategies for “successful” studies consist of studying the same elements over and over again. IFLA mentions surveys/questionnaires as one of

\textsuperscript{37} Poll–Boekhorst te (1996), p. 16.
the most important methods in performance measurements. The questionnaires should consist of a few central questions about specific services. I will use number of these elements in my thesis, which I will explain in the chapter on methodology. I have avoided questionnaires and I have instead chosen to use a qualitative method of working with interviews that are based on a survey-like approach. The motivation for this is that the questions could be rephrased as well as further developed and not become too static as I find that most elements of performance measurement has a risk to do. The discussion about the notion of context and a time aspect is rather limited. Therefore the questions within performance measurement can be said to be quite rigid. As I have mentioned, to some extent the ideas of performance measurements are that they can be used in a repetitive way and on several occasions. That is why there is a prevailing belief in constructing fixed questions and approaches that can be used on different occasions. I do not believe in the repetitiveness nature in performance measurement partly due to that the meaning of artefacts and expressions can differ greatly from time to time. This is one of the reasons why I do not conduct a strict performance measurement study. To perform that type of study is also something that will be of little use, the library in this study works under quite different conditions than of that of the western world. The different indicators are for instance impossible to measure. Some of the common indicators as checked out books, use of interlibrary loan are not even possible to discern in this library because these services are not fully developed yet (or it would take too much time in aspect since the collection is not yet fully digitalized). Therefore my approach becomes a bit different and therefore interviews have been used to examine what the users think and need, in contrast the library itself is described to give an idea of under what conditions it is working and what its future developments might be.

One of the elements I also use, except when investigating the mission statement, is the user perspective. It is the users who will be questioned concerning how they use the library and what they think of it. Those questions will in turn touch upon collection, access and in-house use. One of my questions is also to see what the relation between university and library looks like and therefore I will mention how the library is managed and what kind of resources it is given, which also is something that can be find among the guidelines. Those are the elements that can be recognised in my study. The

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interviews with the users will be discussed from the statements of the IFLA-report what aspects that constitute the quality of a library and it will also be discussed in relation to the findings that the literature review discerned.

The use of “western tools” in this kind of study that focus on an institution in Ethiopia can of course be criticised. The implementation of ideas and tools that are shaped in a western world in other cultures is difficult. This might in the end prolong the western dominance in the world and the self-elected role as the represents with the sole right of describing the whole world from a western set of ideas and presenting this as a universal concept. It is my belief though that the study still might tell something about the prevailing conceptions of the University Library in Mekelle. But it will of course be coloured from my western pre-understanding. Postcolonial ideas could easily dissolve my undertakings. Still it is my belief that attention to a marginalized region of the world might in the end, lead to an increased knowledge about the area that in the end might be productive and meaningful in some way. Silence might be worse.

\[\text{\footnotesize It is not within this thesis' framework to present and discuss postcolonial theory. There is a vivid discussion concerning the western dominance in framing the whole world through its ideas and practices and constructing a western discourse. This can mainly be seen by the creation of the “we” and “the other” dichotomy. For further reading: Among others, Valentine Mudimbe, and the postcolonial troika, consisting of the authors Homi K Bhabha Edward W. Said and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.}\]
Sources and Methodology

The case study is structured into two different parts:

- The first part contains a description of the library’s resources, composition and the library’s and the university’s relation to one another. This is an attempt to discern the structure of how work within the frame of the library is formed. An interview and conversations with the Head Librarian serves as a base for this part as well as the draft for the strategic plan. The IUC programme will be presented here as well, since it involves the resources and current structure of the library.
- The users’ view and experiences of the library and its resources. The interviews with students and academic staff are the sources for this section.

Case study as a method
The method of case studies is the central aspect that will set the framework for this thesis. The character of case studies offers a holistic approach which means that the object of study can be approached in a comprehensive mode. Therefore several aspects of the MUL are covered.

Donald Case mentions case study as a method in *Looking for Information: a survey of research on information seeking, needs, and behaviour*. Case describes the context-orientated mode of procedure that case study usually illustrates. Methods differ but a qualitative way of working is common.

The case study method is, then, a research strategy in which varied types of evidence may be collected (ranging from archival records to firsthand and second-hand accounts of thoughts and actions) by various methods (e.g., interviewing). The type of evidence gathered may be highly quantitative (e.g. sales records of a company, or circulation
statistics of a library) but it is more likely to be highly qualitative (notes or transcripts of an interview).\textsuperscript{61}

As illustrated above and also in the passage about evaluation studies within library and information science, these kind of studies can be pursued in both a quantitative and qualitative way.

A case study can be applied on different phenomenon such as a process, a person or an organisation. One can illuminate the different factors that constitute a situation. In this way the form of case study does not consist of specific methods, rather one can compose a mixtures of different approaches.\textsuperscript{62} My methodological undertakings are of a qualitative character. The interviews are set with standard questions, but are in the end more extensive and allow a depth in the responses more than a questionnaire might do. Also, the documents I study are approached by a text-analysing mode that must be defined as qualitative.

**Delimitations and sources**
First of all the delimitation of this study lies within that the library is studied during a limited time period of approximately six weeks, which means that it is only during this period of time that this study can be said to be valid for a description of the library. As discussed in the previous chapter, focus on information and libraries in Africa at a whole does not exist in abundance. My intention with the study is also to highlight the information and library situation in an educational context in Ethiopia. Therefore the study should not be viewed solely as an evaluation study in a strict sense (as previously mentioned, follow up studies would in this case be preferable), and it serves as description of the state of this specific library at the time of the study. One should be careful with generalising about the order of things only from the perspective of one case study, as it is under the subjection of many things such as the subjective me carrying out the study, and the aspect of time and context. My part in the process cannot be diminished, as it is my observations and my interpretations of the interviews that ultimately create this study. Also, I am an external interviewer, I have no previous knowledge about this library and therefore I might miss out on important matters and facts concerning the library. At the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{61} Case, Donald. O (2002). *Looking for Information: a survey of research on information seeking, needs, and behaviour*, p. 180.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
same time this might as well work as a positive factor of this study, that I therefore can portray it and its users without any locally coloured pre-understandings concerning the activities to do with the library. Keeping an objective role while undertaking studies of this kind is a topic that needlessly to say has been widely discussed. Donald Case mentions this and among others, Nils Gilje and Harald Grimen discuss this as well, just to mention some. The conclusion is that you can never really be objective but one can strive towards this.  

The sources consist of the draft for the strategic plan and related documents to do with budget and the number of enrolments, observations to a minor extent and mainly an interview and conversations with the Head Librarian and a selection of users. The strategic plan contains the mission statement and the goals of the library. What should be pointed out is that this is a draft made by the Head Librarian and is yet to be seen as the final official document of the library. However it is the only source available to carry out a study like this, and it is also expected that this draft will not be subjected to any major changes. This document also contains estimated statistics concerning the library. The Head Librarian has compiled different statistics and underlines that this is mostly estimations. This is of course problematic to use, but I will try to point out and discuss the problems with it when I reveal the statistics in the Investigation chapter. The other option would be to use none of the figures, instead I will use it to some extent but at the same time illustrate the difficulties concerning it. These two discussed issues can also in a way already be seen as a result of this case study, that the library lack a tradition of keeping statistics as well as discussing the goals and mission of the library. When describing the IUC programme the annual reports of this project will be used. Finally, the second part will consist of interviews with the users of the library. I will in the next passage present the interviews and their character as a source.

The interviews, its delimitations and structure
The first delimitation concerning the interviews is the selection of interviewees. Secondly it is limited to how these in turn explain how they experience the library. The qualitative user perspective has its drawbacks that it cannot be easily measurable, such as measuring the amount of checked out books etc,
which in turn might show much the Library in reality is used. The users as a source of information of course involves a more complicated aspect since the person will formulate how he or she feels about the library.\footnote{Poll–Boekhorst te (1996), p. 20.} (Ideas are of course more difficult to present in a uniform way than let’s say statistics for instance) At the same time as this is the remainder of the study, that it focuses on the users’ experiences, one has to keep in mind that it is limited to how a few users explain their experiences of the situation. When conducting interviews there are several aspects to consider, and there are a number of modes for conducting an interview. Interviews can be structured in different ways. Usually a distinction between standardising and structure is made. Standardising has to do with the way the questions are posed, if they are posed in the same way to several persons and set in advance leaving little room for changes during the actual interview. One says that the interview has a high degree of standardising if the questions are fixed like this. Structure involves how open-ended or closed the questions are and how greatly the answers can differ.\footnote{Patel, Runa–Davidson, Bo (2001), Forskningsmetodikens grunder: att planera genomföra och rapportera en undersökning, p. 60-61.} Also, the matter of influence while carrying out an interview is central, since the situation is a constructed one where I as an interviewer might influence the interviewee with my way of posing questions.\footnote{Patel, Davidson (2001), p. 63.}

The interviews with students and academic staff undertook some degree of structure and a higher degree of standardising. The questions could be reorganised and there was a possibility to develop them further. Sometimes for instance a person covered aspects of questions I had planned to pose but had yet not done. Even if the responds to the questions were of an open-ended character the responses didn’t differ greatly. Some persons were more interested in the issues and had a lot to say whereas some people did not expand on their thoughts, thus the responses were developed in different ways, but still the content of their answers did not really vary to any extent. In some cases further questions were posed in connection to the set questions, and further discussion then took place. The interviews were not too rigid in this way and I would describe them as half-structured. During the interviews I took notes. I later noticed that I actually had forgotten to pose certain questions in some cases. This was the case with the interviews with the academic staff, a point to which I will return.
The interview with the Head Librarian was also preceded with fixed questions but was also open for further discussion and changes during the interview. Therefore it had elements of structure and some degree of standardising. However I returned to the Head Librarian with further questions about the library at several occasions which took the form of conversations. The conversations can be described as informal talks where I posed prepared questions.

An alternative would have been to have a small degree of structure and standardising, which some suggest should be the case for research interviews in order to go more deeply into the topic. Otherwise questionnaires can be used. 67 My view is that the interviews did not take the same rigid structure as questionnaires can take and that the interviews made way for a further development of the questions and further discussion, furthermore if any confusion concerning the questions appeared it could also be clarified. As well, this allowed me to speak to a greater selection of persons.

Most evaluation studies do consist of asking the user and non user, which is usually conducted through interviews or questionnaires. The interviews and questionnaires should be pilot tested with great care. 68 First of all, I used questions that had been used earlier in similar circumstances. Generally I used the same questions and the same structure of questions that have been used in the University Libraries in Africa, a review of their current state and future potential, these were in some extent already tested for that group of people, which consisted of the same type of persons that I interviewed, namely students, academic staff and librarians. I will return to this matter shortly. I tried to include a presence of non-users in my study through interviewing users whom I did not find in direct connection to the library, although a majority of the students were chosen in the library.

Considering the questions, I first decided which questions to use and which not to, I then added some new questions. After my first couple of interviews I perceived an idea if the questions were feasible and determined they were satisfying, and did not change them in any greater extent. Since it was an interview, the person in question made me aware when he or she did not understand the question and I could then rephrase the question or explain what I meant. What should be noted in relation to this is that English is the official

67 Andersen, Vilmer och Gamdrup, Peter, 1994, "Om problemformulering och projektarbete", p. 80–84.
language of teaching from the 9th grade in Ethiopia and therefore I chose to undertake all my interviews without an interpreter. Although this does not mean that people actually are used to speaking English in a fluent way. My personal experience is that the level of English is not at a high level among students, and therefore one can question why I did not use an interpreter. One should also keep in mind that English is not my first language, and therefore there lies a risk in miscommunication. My experience though, is that the obstacles of using English were not to such a degree that the interviews could not be considered valid. A greater difference could be noticed between undergraduate and postgraduate students, the postgraduates were more comfortable speaking English. With the academic staff, the language was not an issue in the same manner. These two latter groups were also more opinionated and had more standpoints concerning the area, these interviews also became longer than those with undergraduate students. This is probably the case owing to the fact they use the library in a different way and also have more experience from using a library.

Selection concerning the interviewees
The scope of my interviews was based on the different faculties within the university. I chose to treat the Pharmacology Department as separated from the Medical one, since the pharmacology-users were somewhat caught between the two campuses and therefore I found their opinion valuable (All the classes and offices were at one campus and the material was in another campus situated some kilometres further away). However I only allowed this user-group to be represented by a teacher from the academic staff. Two graduate students were interviewed from each faculty making it a total of fourteen. They were for all but two in their third year of studies or more, which meant that they had some experience of the library. The two exceptions were in their second year. Two faculties conduct postgraduate studies and therefore two from each of these were interviewed. Finally, one teacher from each faculty was interviewed making it a total number of seven. Among the undergraduates students the representation of gender was divided equally. But, as almost always is the case

69 The official language in Ethiopia is Amharic. Alongside this language there exist many other ones in the different regions. Mekelle is situated in Tigray where Tigrinya is spoken. Nationalencyklopedin, Etiopienspråk. http://www.ne.se/jsp/search/article.jsp?i_art_id=164954&i_sect_id=164937&i_word=&i_history=2 2007-05-29.
with the academic world and the society at large, women were harder to find the higher I moved into the hierarchy. Therefore women were underrepresented in the interviews with postgraduate students and academic staff. As mentioned one aspect of criticism is that there is only one user representing the Pharmacology Department, this is due to a failure from my side since I received the knowledge of the situation about the department at a late state in my data-collection. Still I find the population for this study as constitutes a comprehensive aspect. However, once again, one should keep in mind that the selection of interviewees is just a selection and the population group is too small to make claims on representing the whole user group of the university. Though still it gives an idea of what some users think of their information-situation and their use of the library.

**Chart 1 Selection of users**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate Students</th>
<th>Postgraduate students</th>
<th>Academic Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Compilation based on the amount of users interviewed.*

The selection of the interviewees was by a random mode. Concerning the students I simply asked around in the groups at the different libraries if anyone would consider taking part in a short interview. This went quite smoothly, most accepted at once and usually I did not have to wait long for anyone to participate. When finding postgraduate students I went to a special computer-room for postgraduates situated within one of the libraries. Only one of the two faculties with postgraduate studies seemed represented, so at first I had only interviewed post graduate students from the Faculty of Agriculture. Later I connected with post graduate students from the Faculty of Technology through the agricultural post graduate students. Among both the students and the academic staff it sometimes happened that they knew of someone suited to my target group and therefore they could introduce the people to me. In this way I did not only have data people actually visiting the library, potential non-users of the library could in this way be reached since I did not find them in connection the actual library. The academic staff consisted of teachers I met randomly during my time spent at campus as well as contacting the Dean of the specific department who in turn established contact between a teacher and I. The academic staff consisted of both junior academics and senior ones. In this way different levels of research experience was covered.
The interviews with the students took place in a remote part or room connected to the library-building in question. The interviews with the academic staff took place in their offices. A few interviews were conducted in the campus café. I did not experience that the interviews differed from place to place, which I initially feared they would. It might be difficult for people to express their real views about the library when sitting in it, but this was not the case.

My questions to the users dealt with how much the library is used, if the users were satisfied with its resources and services, and if they were familiar with some of the electronic resources of the library. The interview and conversations with the Head Librarian were used to clarify the procedures of the library and aimed at letting the librarian discuss the work of the library and the recent developments. He has worked within the library for seven years, therefore he was able to discuss the changes that had taken place and his experiences concerning this and also what he was thinking about future developments. In the following passage the structure of the questions will be presented.

The questions to the users
The questions to the users were:

- Where do you go to find the information you need for your studies?
- Are you satisfied with the sources of information available to you?
- How often do you use the library?
- Which part of the library collections/services do you use the most?
- What changes have you experienced within the library since you started your studies?
- To what extent are you satisfied with the library collections/services as a resource for supporting your studies? Do you have any problems?
- What change would you most like to see made to the library collections/services?
- Are you aware of that the library has a website, and that there is an online catalogue? Do you use the card-catalogue or the one in internet?70

70 As earlier mentioned the questions were mainly fetched from the *University Libraries in Africa, a review of their current state and future potential* vol. 1, p. 79-81. I added the question about the ICT-implementation.
For the academic staff the questions were rephrased so that they concerned research and teaching instead of studies, for a complete list see appendix. An additional question about whether the interviewee had any references to other libraries abroad was also in some cases posed, and they were asked to compare their experiences from the different libraries. This type of question was put to see how, and if, they could compare MUL primarily with other African libraries. But this question was a bit of a failure, so I have in the end excluded it from my investigation. Comments on this question were few and most interviewees had not visited other libraries. Most of the ones replying stated that they had been to western libraries and that these of course differed greatly from their own library. In some cases further discussion was pursued and I asked related questions such as if the students felt that they could pursue their studies without the library or not or if they had been offered any introduction to the library or what they did if they could not get hold of the material they wanted. The questions aimed at investigating how much the library was used and in what way, what future changes the users wanted and also if they had any experience of the “digital library”. The next passage will discuss my approach toward the investigation of the library and its staff in some extent.

The investigation concerning the library
The questions to the Head Librarian focused onto examine how the library was composed, procedures of work, what he himself thought the users used and what kind of developments that had taken place within the library as well within their own management.\(^7\)

Part of the time I was at the University of Mekelle the staff of the library showed me around the libraries and their different facilities. The procedure can to some extent be described as me having informal talks with the staff of the library, and through these tours they allowed me to see what the libraries are like and I could pose questions to them. I mainly rely on the interview and conversations with the Head Librarian for describing the library and its

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\(^7\) Here I was also inspired by the questions used in the report, but to a much further extent I changed the questions and did not use all of them. The reason for me not using the exact questions was because one of the report’s objectives was to let the librarians evaluate their own work within the library. My objective with the interview was to get an idea of how the library actually worked and receive a description of this and to a much lesser extent see what the staff thought about their own work. Since the interview and conversations with the Head Librarian thus was carried out with another objective than the interviews with the users, I have chosen to show these questions in an appendix, since they are not as central as the questions considering the users in my study. For a comparison the questions used in the report can be found on p. 78 sqq., vol. 1.
facilities. In some instances I will use information received during the visits at the different libraries and these pieces of information will be treated as partly originating from methodology of open observation. Limitations with this are that, as earlier mentioned regarding the interviews, my presence of course affects the whole situation. Also, since the intention of this study is to offer a user perspective and their experiences of the library, it might well be the case that the staff wanted me to see the library from its best side and I therefore received a different picture than what was really the case.

This chapter has illustrated that the case study as a method can involve a broad mode of procedure. My methodological undertakings are of a qualitative kind with a context orientated aspect. The sources used are a draft for a strategic plan, documents concerning budgets and the number of enrolments, interviews and conversations with the Head Librarian and last but not least, interviews with the users of the library.
Investigation

The study is divided into two different parts.

1. First a description of the Library and its resources will take place, and here the mission statement and the goals of the Library will be presented. This part will also cover the Library’s and university’s relation to one another and is an attempt to discern the structure of the Library. The sources for this are the interview and conversations with the Head Librarians as well as the draft for the strategic plan for the library and documents concerning budget and number of enrolments.

2. The second part of the study consists of the user-study, where the results of the interviews will be related and analysed to material that has been presented in the chapter Literature Review.

The investigation will be pursued with a continuous analysis and then a Summarizing Discussion will follow.

The library and its resources

First a description of the physical libraries will take place with the help of some statistics that the Head Librarian has compiled which are of a more estimated kind. These statistics are found in a draft for the strategic plan of the library on which he is currently working. Thereafter the budget and some of the work procedures and policies of the library will be described in order to give an idea of how parts of the work at the library are pursued as well as giving an idea of how the university and library interact. I have chosen to describe the matter of acquisition since this is a central matter for both the library and the university and is a point where they do collaborate. This section will end with a discussion of the strategic plan for the Library that contains outlines of the mission and goals.
As mentioned the MU Library consist of six different libraries, which are the following:

1. Technology Faculty Library
2. Education Faculty Library
3. Agricultural, Veterinary and Post Graduate Library
4. Ayder Campus Library (Medicine)
5. Business and Economics Faculty Library
6. Law Faculty Library

Collection and facilities
In each and every library the collections and facilities differ. There has not been a tradition of keeping statistics within the library and the Head Librarian has therefore, as already mentioned, made an estimation of statistics concerning the library which he displays in the draft for the strategic plan of MU Library which is currently under construction. The statistics have been collected during 2005 and 2006. No statistics are currently kept considering reference questions etc. In two of the six libraries separate reading rooms for blind people with related material are offered. In the Library of Business and Economy there is also an entrance and separate facilities for people with physical disabilities. In this library and in the Agricultural, Veterinary and Post Graduate Library separate reading rooms for female students can also be found.

The library has within the frame of the IUC project started registering the collection into a database and it is therefore possible to see how many items that have been catalogued so far. The number of registered items are at the moment 55 000. The Head Librarian estimates the total collection to 150 000 and he claims that 1/3 has so far been registered. In some cases CD ROMs connected to some of the books are also available and these are kept separately from the books and are estimated to be 4000 copies. Some of the collection is put in circulation when it is treated as reference material and it is part of the recommended literature for a course. In all libraries but the Library of Law the students have access to printed catalogues that are possible to search via title or

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72 Mekelle University Libraries Five Year Strategic Plan (2007-2011), First Draft, p. 6. (MUA)
73 Conversation 2007-03-07 with Head Librarian at MUL, Mekelle.
74 Visit 2007-01-25 to the Library for Agricultural and Veterinary Library and visit 2007-01-31 to Library of Business and Economy, Mekelle.
75 Interview 2007-02-08 with Head Librarian at MUL, Mekelle.
the authors’ name. In the Library of Law it is not possible to search for books other than to browse through the content on the shelves, except for a minor extent of the collection as for literature put in circulation.\textsuperscript{76}

Some of the libraries keep periodicals whereas some do not. Due to the small amount of copies the periodicals are only to be used within the library.\textsuperscript{77} The Library of Agricultural, Veterinary and Post Graduate has the largest collection of periodicals and these are here also made accessible via lists by date and title.\textsuperscript{78} The only other library that also keeps a list over its periodicals and makes them at least accessible via title is the Library of Business and Economy.\textsuperscript{79} Periodicals are also kept in the Library of Technology but they are not registered in any form and there is no other way than looking in the actual shelves in order to see what is available. The shelving for the journals is not done in any specific manner, they are scattered on the shelves.\textsuperscript{80} The Library of Medicine does not possess periodicals of any kind really and neither does the Library of Law. Both mainly have a very few chosen publications. There is an absence of continuous subscriptions, but lately the MU Library is collaborating with the University Library of Addis Ababa and therefore shares a subscription for a certain number of e-journals. This subscription is within the framework of Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERI) and is subsided by outside sources.\textsuperscript{81} The amount of estimated periodicals can be viewed in the following table:

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|}
\hline
Library & Estimated Periodicals \\
\hline
Library of Technology & \\
Library of Medicine & \\
Library of Law & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Estimated Periodicals}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{76} Visit 2007-01-31 to Faculty Library of Law and conversation 2007-02-19 with Head Librarian, Mekelle.
\textsuperscript{77} “Mekelle University Libraries Five Year Strategic Plan (2007-2011), First Draft”, p. 6. (MUA)
\textsuperscript{78} Visit 2007-01-25 to the Agricultural and Veterinary Post Graduate Library, Mekelle.
\textsuperscript{79} Visit 2007-01-31 to Library of Business and Economy, Mekelle.
\textsuperscript{80} Visit 2007-01-25 to the Faculty Library of Technology, Mekelle.
\textsuperscript{81} Interview 2007-02-08 with Head Librarian, Mekelle. The collaboration consists of a consortium of different university libraries in Ethiopia and together they pay about 2 percent of the total sum for these subscriptions. Sida stands for the biggest contribution in this and pay almost everything. The object of PERI is to enable access to international research, for further details see International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications’ (INASP) website \url{www.inasp.info/perindex.shtml} 2007-02-14.
Table no. 2. Total holdings of information sources (books + journals) of MUL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Source</th>
<th>Current Collection (2006)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal Subscriptions</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazine Subscriptions</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper Subscriptions</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDROMs</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Connection</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Journals</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-books</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Strategic Plan For Mekelle University Libraries: First Draft

One must take into consideration when reading the statistics that the continuity of subscriptions varies, and that some of the periodicals, like the donated ones, might just consist of a few limited numbers or even single issues. The distinction between journals and magazines are said to be research-character and non research-character.\(^{82}\) The library has therefore hardly any journal subscriptions to speak of more than the current online journals that are available through the collaboration and a recent purchase of journals on CD-ROMs covering a selection of agricultural journals from 1993 to current date.\(^{83}\) This is a rather big collection in comparison to the other journals in the Library. Other things to consider concerning the statistics is thus that the CDROM-collection also consists of journals. So in a way there are actually more journals existing than at first glance, but due to the fact that single issues of journals are treated and categorised as a whole subscription, this has little bearing on the sum in the collection. The Head Librarian mentions that he tries to set guidelines for donators on what kind of material that is needed, still they receive material that are not too relevant.\(^{84}\)

With this data it is thus possible to conclude that the Library collection mainly consist of textbooks.

Access to internet depends on what level you are studying, for example the post graduate students have a separate computer-room. In the Library of Business and Economy all 3rd year students have access to a special computer-room and also there is one computer in the same library in the separate reading

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\(^{82}\) Conversation 2007-02-19 with Head Librarian, Mekelle.

\(^{83}\) Interview 2007-02-08 with Head Librarian, Mekelle.

\(^{84}\) Interview 2007-02-08 with Head Librarian, Mekelle.
room for female students. All in all it is estimated that there are 20 computers with internet access.\textsuperscript{85}

At one point the amount of seating has been counted. The seating was counted in each library and the percentage of students being served was compiled separately per each library. It was concluded that students were being served with a seat was ranging from 32.58 percent to 89.23.

When I counted the amount of seats in the post graduate rooms I found that the amount of seats for reading was 22. With the chairs in the computer room (one for each computer) the amount of seats was 33. This is quite a large difference from the stated 58 seats for the post graduate students. One explanation might be that chairs were recently changed, newer chairs had been placed in the reading room and these might take more place than the old ones. According to the Head Librarian they do not in any way want to diminish the seating-problem. In contradiction it is a problem they strongly want to highlight. Again, this aspect illuminates that one should perhaps treat the statistics with scepticism. If the current number of students enrolled at the university, 19,999\textsuperscript{86}, and divide it by the total amount of seating from the staff estimation, including my estimation of chairs in the postgraduate library, the amount of students per seat will be as follows (I chose to change the manner of accounting the numbers. Instead I show students/seat because this will make it easier to compare with the case of Addis Ababa University further on.):

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
Current Student Population & Current Seat Capacity & Students per seat \\
\hline
19999 & 2537 & 19999/2537= 7.88 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Seat capacity}
\end{table}

7.88 students per seat. Another obstacle with this though, is that at the time of the estimation of the seats, the Ayder campus hosting the Medical Faculty


\textsuperscript{86} “Registered students in the year 2007: Mekelle University Office of the Registrar, From the Beginning Up To 1998 Academic Years, Students Enrolled As Diploma (Regular, Evening, Summer/In-Service & Distance)” (MUA)
Library was not in use. This means that there are a couple of more seats to consider, but these are anyway not plenty.

Thus the amount of seats/student is rather low, it means that not even half of the students can be seated in one of the libraries at the same time.

Staff
The majority of the staff within the Mekelle University Libraries does not have a higher degree of education. Out of 96 staff members three have a bachelor of science and four have a diploma.\(^\text{87}\) Most of the staff at the library has no library science training. Through the IUC programme there has been training for staff so now one librarian has a master in LIS and two other staff members are currently pursuing master studies within this field.\(^\text{88}\)

What can be concluded so far concerning the collection, facilities and the composition of the staff, is that a very small number withholds adequate education.

Opening hours
All the libraries run what they call a 24 hours service. But during midday they close for lunch for one hour, and they are also closed in the morning for an hour. On Sundays the libraries are closed for the entire day.

The IUC programme
With support from the Belgian government development cooperation Flemish Inter-University Council (VLIR) has a partnership programme with Mekelle University. The aim is to strengthen Mekelle University as an institute of higher education. First and foremost the programme strives to create a sustainable livelihood in Tigrai (the region of Northern Ethiopia where Mekelle is situated). The programme consists of three major project areas: ICT and Library-Related Institutional Development, Institutional Policy and Management Capacity Development and Collaborative Research.\(^\text{89}\) The first cluster involves the project concerning the library. It should be pointed out that the programme is to continue until 2013 and is therefore still in process and is yet to be completed. The objectives of the project concerning the library are

\(^{87}\) “Mekelle University Libraries Five Year Strategic Plan (2007-2011), First Draft”, p. 7 (MUA) 
\(^{89}\) “VLIR & Mekelle University Inter-University Partnership Programme” 2003-2013.
The objective of the MU-IUC Library Project is to make the MU libraries capable of providing timely and relevant information services by coping with the increasing number of its users, and to make it an interesting place for the staff to work.\textsuperscript{90}

The project has focused on staff training, ICT-development concerning the library service system and development of the collection. Computers and other automation related material have been purchased and open source software provided by UNESCO has been chosen for the library system.\textsuperscript{91} Books have been purchased for a total amount of 15,238 USD.\textsuperscript{92}

The cataloguing is carried out without any subject heading since, according to the Head Librarian, the staff has no training in this. The catalogue has mainly to do with call numbers.

According to the reports all the different undertakings are usually described as successful as to the actual implementation of the technical system, the staff training and development and the distribution of electronic resources such as the PERI programme. There is no discussion about from what perspective the IUC project is considered as a success. For instance, little is mentioned about the outcome for the actual users. Since no user-studies have been made it is thus difficult to say how they have been affected by the project and if the actions of the project can be said to be a success from the eyes of the users. Are the students for instance aware of the change of the technical restructuring? One can therefore question whether the project has made a change to how the users perceive and use the library. If the goals and the mission statement of the library is to serve its users in a successful manner it would be of importance to regard how the library project thus is perceived by its main target group.

Budget and means of acquisition and purchase
For the year 2005 the library was given 436,580 birr which is the equivalent of 1.0 percent of the budget for the university. In 2006 the library was assigned 97,500 which makes out 0.8 percent of the total budget.\textsuperscript{93} The reason for reviewing these specific years has to do with that this material was accessible at the time and that the budget for this year, 2007, involved some uncertainties and therefore I chose not to present this.

\textsuperscript{90} Mekelle University Library http://mulib.mu.edu.et 2007-01-29.
\textsuperscript{91} “Mekelle University-VLIR AP-2003 Annual Report, -2004 Annual Report and Progress Report AP-2005 3\textsuperscript{rd} Quarter (June to August 2005)”, (MUA)
\textsuperscript{92} “Mekelle University-VLIR AP-2004 Annual Report” p. 7-8, (MUA)
\textsuperscript{93} “Budget allocation for the years 2005 and 2006” (MUA)
This is less than what is recommended for university libraries according to the article were Mutula mentioned that international figures usually are at six percent. But the budget for the library is in fact greater than this. The structuring of the budget for the library and its purchase of material is put together from different allocaters, such as governmental support. As far as acquisition and purchase of books is concerned, the faculties use some of their budget for this purpose. And the current IUC programme has enabled a lot of purchases to the library and also funding coming directly from the government and not from the university is also spent on acquisition. Therefore it is difficult to say how large a part of the budget is used to the actual purchases of acquisition. What one might conclude though is that the library would probably not get far on the mere support from the university itself.

The IUC programme has not only offered the ability of an extension of the acquisition, it has also enabled training of staff and established other improvement of services, which will be presented shortly in the part concerning the IUC programme. But the major contributor to purchase of material to the library is funded directly by the government and currently a book order of quite great quantity in comparison to the existing collections, has been compiled. In this way the library receives more financing than at first glance when only considering the figures from the university budget.

The salaries of the staff are partially financed by the government, therefore it is not possible to see how much percentage of the budget for the Library is spent on the staff. Since the Addis Ababa University showed that a lot of money was spent on staff, I thought it could be of interest to see if it was the same case with MU. Unfortunately this is not possible. What can be stated is that at the moment a lot of staff is probably needed but after the automation process is fulfilled a decrease of staff members probably can take place, as many staff members will perhaps not be needed.

The Head Librarian explains that the library lack a proper acquisition policy and states that this is something that need improvement. The current work procedure is described as nuisance and rather tedious. The library compiles lists of titles that they gather the different faculties need. The faculties view these lists and then return the lists. But this is carried out at a slow pace and the library and faculties send these lists back and forth before agreeing on what titles to purchase. A final list is in the end compiled and the board of the library release the list in a form of advertisement in selected Ethiopian newspapers where bidding is proposed. Publishers then leave proposals which are reviewed by the library who selects the ones who offers the best rates. This
review is also described as quite an extensive form of work. In other words, the acquisition is considered to be rather tiresome work that takes a great deal of time in question, and especially since the faculties compile their requests at various speeds. The Head Librarian explains that the process is too slow and therefore the users cannot procure necessary material at an appropriate speed.\textsuperscript{94}

As for now, following summarisations and conclusions can be made about the reviewed areas: The collection shows there are (150 000/19 999) 7.5 monographs per student which can be compared with the case study from Addis Ababa University Library where the same numbers per student is 48\textsuperscript{95} (although this seems to include serials to some extent as well.). The collection can in comparison to the amount of students therefore be considered as fairly low. The estimated statistics are distributed in quite a questionable manner since the category “subscriptions” consist of whatever random number of a magazine that were found at the moment of the account. One should also remember that there of course are actual ongoing subscriptions as the electronic subscriptions through the PERI programme, but still the fact remains that the compiled statistics is quite misleading. As the investigation soon will show there is rather questionable how available these e-journals really are to the users. Also the subscriptions and the seating have never caught up with the growing number of students. The opening hours are generous and only really closed on Sundays. With the help of the IUC programme digitalizing the collection has commended and several people from the staff have had the possibility to achieve a degree in LIS. The IUC programme also supports the acquisition of the library. The acquisition policy is according to the Head Librarian at the moment too slow and tedious. The Head Librarian describes the relation with the University as working, and the University as supportive. The budget for the library from within the frame of the university is low. One should take into consideration though that much of the library is financed from other instances as well, what one should note especially is that some support comes from the faculties as well as the government. But if this is enough to actually make the actual number to about six percent of the total university budget is rather doubtful. Even so, the university should see to that the library is given enough of resources from its own budget in order to satisfy the basic needs of the users. As the summarizing of the case study report came to the conclusion that a great deal of the staff of the library was on a non-professional

\textsuperscript{94} Interview 2007-02-08 with the Head Librarian, Mekelle.
level, the same can be stated about MUL. Few people have degrees and even fewer have relevant degrees, but this is also something that the Head Librarian claims they are currently working on, to increase the number of qualified personal.

The mission statement and the goals of the library
Since the combination of the mission statement and the goals of the library together with the users’ view determines the quality of a library according to IFLA, a briefing of the Mekelle University Library’s mission statement and goals will here be presented and discussed. One objection to this part of the study is, as earlier mentioned, that the utilized document does not yet have an official status.

The mission statement touches upon six areas; that the library should

1. enable information sources for its users to make them well qualified,
2. provide service for its users,
3. give access to information sources with an emphasis on IT-sources,
4. to act multidisciplinary,
5. pursue co-operation with other libraries, nationally and internationally, both for sharing resources and services,
6. offer information literacy to its users96

This means that the mission statement involves the user in many different aspects. What is clear is that there is a user-perspective in terms of that the service and sources are directed to this group and also, the last point dealing with information literacy is clearly a user-oriented question. Which is something that the IFLA-report mentioned as something that ought to be covered by the goals and with the stakeholder approach. (Collection, access, in-house use, user-education storage and preservation.)

In the strategic plan goals for the library can be found within the framework for the five year strategic plan. This means that I use the goals from the strategic plan as the over all goals for the library.97 The goals concern the following areas:

- Resources

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96 “Mekelle University Libraries Strategic Plan First Draft”, p. 10. (MUA)
97 The Head Librarian claims that this is the case. Conversation 2007-03-07. (MUA)
If one compares the mission statement and the goals with the guidelines set by IFLA, one can see that most of the areas are in some way mentioned. One can see that the goals and mission of course are intertwined, which might often be the case, but the case with MUL seems to be that the two are intertwined to a great extent. The mission statement does include a user-perspective which is recommended by IFLA’s mode of organising these issues. But in question of collection it does not specifically mention the status of the collection more than that the MUL "should offer information sources and services to users to make them well qualified (…)". Thus it is possible to say that this means that the collection ought to be of a certain quality. In house use is mentioned within Facilities, where it is said that adequate space and functional equipment are to be provided. Storage and preservation are partly mentioned in connection to the point discussing ICT, where it is stated that recent and up to date information should be available in all formats. But the preservation of existing material is not discussed in any further way. It seems like the goals touch upon many of the just mentioned aspects of what should be included in the mission statement. And in turn, the issues that ought to be covered by the goals are to an extent instead mentioned in the mission statement.

If one brings in the stakeholder approach while viewing mission and goals following aspects can be discussed. Other users are not specified specifically in the goals, but this is in one way mentioned in the mission statement concerning the ideas on resource sharing where it is stated that the skills of staff, facilities and services of the university library ought to be available to other libraries and spheres beyond that as well, all in order for the overall development of the

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country. Library staff, and managers of the institution are mentioned together in the matter dealing with library staff and the administration. Government of the library is not mentioned, more than in the previous areas where it mostly comes to the actual management within the library. The research community outside of the institution is not mentioned within the goals really more than that MUL should “initiate and develop consortia with other Ethiopian and African University Libraries”. In the mission statement it is mentioned though that the MUL should create a network for resource sharing nationally as well as internationally and it does not state that it has to be university libraries, just libraries. This does mean that the idea of creating a wider springboard for researchers than just the one considering only the African university libraries is present. This also means that the cooperation-aspect is covered mostly by the mission statement even though the cooperation among African university libraries is mentioned within the frames of the point “Communication and Cooperation”. The mission statement also touches upon the aspect of the society in a wider sense in connection to the aspect of resource sharing when it is stated that this should be seen as way of contributing “to the overall development of the country”. The different groups in the stakeholder approach can therefore be said to appear within the mission and goals.

The overall state of the mission statement and goals is that it touches upon most of the guidelines from IFLA, although more in a combination of these two elements than seen each as separate entities. A deficiency can be noted concerning the collection in the mission statement as it does not say explicitly what can be expected of it and neither how it should be constructed more than to consist of up to date material. The user-perspective can be said to be more evident in the goals, where the need for user orientation is expressed more vividly. What should be noted is that the vision statement and the value statement take the user-perspective a bit further due to the fact that it mentions both user friendliness and the idea of assisting quality in research. Concluding remarks are that the user orientation is not dominating, it could be greater in the mission statement and the goals. At present it lies with stronger emphasis in the vision. It therefore seems to be a considered aspect for future development.

99 Mekelle University Libraries Strategic Plan First Draft p. 19. (MUA)
100 Mekelle University Libraries Strategic Plan First Draft p. 10. (MUA)
101 Mekelle University Libraries Strategic Plan First Draft p. 10 sq. (MUA)
The statement of mission and goals is of course only one aspect to consider when looking into the state of a library. It is one thing to set up goals for a library and one thing to try to clarify how the library actually in reality is working. Therefore the user study will reveal how the users actually perceive the library and this will complement the previous discussion about the mission and goals. Are these actually met according to the users and their needs?

The users’ interaction with the library
This section presents the result of the interviews with the users of the library, the students and the academic staff. The results of the interviews are presented in three themes;

- Use of the library, where the users visits and their collection - use is presented
- The user’s experiences, where satisfaction and related problems are presented

The informants will be referred to as UG (undergraduate), PG (postgraduate) AS (academic staff) and different numbers for different persons.

Use of library, collection-use and in-house use
The questions discussed in this passage are the following:

- How often do you use the library?
- Which part of the library collections/services do you use the most?
- Where do you go to find the information you need for your studies?

Usage of the libraries differs among the user groups. Among the undergraduate students the greatest difference within one user group can be seen, but yet again, this might be because this is the largest group of people I have interviewed. Most of them, eight respondents, state that they usually visit the library on a daily basis. Four estimate they visit the library at least twice a week and two of them estimate they visit the library four times a week.

Among the postgraduate students five claim they usually visit the library everyday. In other words all but one respondent use the library daily and this person (PG5) says he rarely uses it. This is mainly because the library does not contain the books he needs. Many students explain that they use the library every day during exam-periods, and that the length of the visits also may
increase at this time. It is possible to conclude from this that the students claim they use the library to different extents.

The interviewees representing the academic staff visit the libraries to a far less extent. Most of them, five, mention that they visit the library some time during every semester. One teacher (AS4) says he visits the library up to five times per semester and another one (AS2) visits the library every week. Another one says he visits the library only about once per semester (AS3). Thus, the rare use of the library among the academic staff contrasts greatly to the more frequent use among the majority of the students. One of the possible explanations behind this will be discussed when viewing the responses concerning satisfaction and what changes the users would like to see being executed. Anyhow, the students largely depend on the library as a place for carrying out their studies.

Moving on to the collection-use, generally all of the undergraduate students use material for their studies that can be found in the library related to their studies. This means they use reference material that usually is located in the Library Circulation. Four students mention they visit the library in order to use the internet. (UG1,11-14). One student (UG7) explains that he uses the library for ‘recreational purposes’ meaning that he mostly reads the newspapers in the library.

The question “Where do you go to find the information you need for your studies?” appeared as too vague a question at first. However it actually opened up for a different interpretation which I in the end favoured since it gave an idea how the students approached their studies. Most undergraduate students mention they use the library as a source for their studies but quite a number did not name this as a primary source. Some of the undergraduate students answer that that they use their lecture notes (UG1,4,7,8,9) to find the information they need for their studies. Secondly other sources were mentioned such as reference material, meaning textbooks within the given class. They also mention they use the library. Consequently I got the impression that many of the undergraduate students rely to a great extent on their lecture notes as a major source for knowledge before turning to other material. This can be related to the results of the Addis Ababa case study where it was concluded that many students seem to rely on lecture notes. In this way, a repetitive way of learning to a larger extent more dominant than an independent approach of learning. The notes-based way of learning can with most probability be connected to the lack of textbooks that I will shortly return to.
Among the postgraduate students there was a difference in the responses compared to the above mentioned. Many use the library but specified that they used different channels such as the media and journals found in the library. One respondent (PG5) mention that he uses field work as a source. The more varied responses in this group and the absence of mentioning lecture notes probably has to do with the advanced level of their studies. One can assume they have reached a more independent way of working since the studies are on a higher level and prepare for a more research-orientated methodology. It is evident that they all use the library, even the post graduate student who claims he very rarely uses it. One post graduate predominately uses the computers (PG1), yet another one mostly uses journals (PG2), three mention the book collection (PG3,4,5) and two of these also mention internet as a source. The majority thus uses the books in the library.

Mainly textbooks and reference material are used by academic staff (AS1, 2,4,6,7,8) Some mention they also use internet as a complementary source to the material in the library (AS1,2,3,4,7). What should be underlined is that the academic staff mention internet as a source of knowledge, but they do not access this from the actual libraries they use. It is also at the same time described as rather limited. AS1 explained he uses the textbooks in the library only in order to see what books are available to the students so that he can hold his classes based on this material. Nowadays this is the only purpose for his visits to the library. One teacher (AS3) expresses he mainly use the internet as a resource for teaching, and hardly uses the library at all.

When discussing research, many mention internet and journals (AS4,6,7,8) and usually the difficulties with this are also mentioned. Almost all among the academic staff mention the lack of journals when discussing their visits to the library. The insufficient number of journals seems to affect their visits, and this is also something I will return to shortly in reference to the other questions as this is a factor.

The Ayder Campus (Department of Pharmacy and the Faculty of Medicine) are not connected to internet which makes this source quite difficult for the teachers to access. AS6 explains how he and his colleagues pay for using internet in internet cafés for their work.

AS4 and AS5 mention they use old notes and copies of books for their teaching from when they themselves were students. Again one can see that notes are used as a source of knowledge, but this time among the teachers who reuse material they have had as students. This can be interpreted in different ways: that they have good notes that are very useful as a tool in their teaching...
or that they do not have enough material to choose from and use. The lack of material has forced them to use what they already possess.

It seemed that most of the academic staff preferred to discuss the aspect of the conditions for their teaching rather than their research. Most of them mention in relation to this that it is difficult to conduct any research because of the lack of material, to this I will return when discussing their experience of the problems of the library. Two of the teachers express a wish to learn more about how to carry out research (AS3,5, they were both quite young teachers) and to begin the chance to continue with the research, at present they really do not undertake any research.

The majority of all the users express that they mainly use the textbooks in the library. This material seems to be the one most frequently used although some of the postgraduate students and academic staff mention the internet and journals. Although discussions about this revealed that no-one really used internet in the library but used it elsewhere. This was also a reason given by the post graduate students as to why they did not use the internet frequently, due to the fact that they hardly have any access to it. (PG1,4) This was also evident among the academic staff concerning the use of journals, they wished to use them but rarely did, their experience is that the supply of these was not satisfactory (AS1,2,6,7,8). This is something I will return to concerning the question about satisfaction among the users. It further will become evident that there seems to be a great need of textbooks. This is, as shown, the main source of information among the different user-groups.

For now, we will move on to how the users express their experience of the library in terms of satisfaction.

The users’ experiences
This section will start with the question that touches upon if the users have experienced any differences with the library during their time at MU:

- What changes have you experienced within the library since you started your studies?

The postgraduates do not have any comments on this question since all of them but one have conducted the majority of their studies elsewhere. The undergraduate students are the ones who most often can list several changes. The academic staff was not responding either, this may be because the majority of them do not spend that much time in the library.
Many mention that the opening hours have changed to the better in comparison to the previous ones (UG1,3,5,10,11, PG3). Some experience that new books have arrived and that this means that there is a larger selection (UG2,11,12). Two students explain that there are more open stacks now (UG4,5), other opinions were that they welcomed the change lately with more computers (UG9) and that a Female Reading Room has been introduced (UG12). Some mention that there have been changes but not necessarily for better. This includes the increased number of students, which has led to a noisier environment (UG8). UG14 formulates it in the line of that the problems stay the same with the only difference is that the student numbers increase.

I posed this question in order to facilitate the possibility for the informants to reflect upon if they experienced any changes, and changes that have been positive since that it sometimes might be easier to express what one is not satisfied with. This passage shows that at least for the undergraduate students, people have noticed improvements to some extent, especially concerning the opening hours. A couple of students found this change satisfying. Some mention that more books have become available in the open stacks. These improvements illustrate that the library has in this way worked for an improvement with regard to its users. These two points are both in IFLA’s guidelines for what ought to be taken into consideration within a library’s mission. At the same time a couple of users mention the increased number of students and are discontent with this.

Now to the essential focus of the review; the users’ satisfaction.

- Are you satisfied with the sources of information available to you?
- To what extent are you satisfied with the library collections/services as a resource for supporting your studies? Do you experience any problems?

Among all the three groups interviewed some discussed their satisfaction in relation to their expectations, which meant they took the matter of context into consideration. Some thus explained that one has to consider aspects such as that the library is situated in an economically strained environment and that it is a rather new establishment (UG2,14, AS6,7 for example). Many express in relation to this that the library in a sense is “fair”.

To some extent a greater part of the undergraduate students seem partly satisfied, but all of them mention that they experienced many problems. A few
of the persons mention that they are not satisfied at all. (UG2,13, PG5, AS1,5,8)

The problem mentioned by all the interviewed undergraduate students is the lack of textbooks, the books that are listed as reading material for the classes in which they are taking part. This is thus mentioned as the major reason for not being that satisfied or being partly satisfied (UG4,8,9,11,14, PG4,). Not being able to use the internet is also a concern. Other related problems with the textbooks and reference material seem to be that there is insufficient number of copies (UG1-14) and therefore stressing time-limits on certain books is experienced, you may only read for an hour or so (UG1,10, 13). One student explained that he uses the library for “recreational purposes”, and is content with the sources and services for this (UG7). Similarly one student mentions that she is satisfied with the newspapers in the library (UG11). Whereas two other students find that they would like to have more extra-curricular material to browse through when they are not studying (UG13,14).

Most of the academic staff are very dissatisfied with the material for conducting research (AS1,7,8), and all of them claim that there basically are no periodicals. One of them also mentions that it is a problem that there is no copy-machine in the Library (AS8). The inadequacy of periodicals has also been reviewed in the section dealing with the collections of MUL, is also expressed by the users. Taking the compilation of the case studies of African university libraries into consideration the results correlate. The situation concerning periodicals seem to be a prevailing aspect and will be further discussed in the next section.

The lack of information about how to use the library is expressed by some, and after I pose a question to respondents if they have ever had user education and if they think they would benefit from this, they reply that they have not had this and all are positive towards this (UG2,3,6, PG2,3) except for one (UG4). They express that the communication between themselves and the library could be better (UG6, PG3).

Thus the situation around problems concerning sufficient copies of textbooks, latest editions seem to be the same as it was with the University Library in Addis Ababa, over ten years ago. In the same way MU Library offers no user education. And as many of the other reports shown in the literature review, as among others Betty Marton discussed, the situation of the MU Library seem to be the same as many other African countries’ libraries containing out of date material and too few copies of reference textbooks. The
situation of the Addis Ababa University Library over ten years ago seem to some aspects be quite similar to the one of MUL.

The academic staff says that they sometimes have to go elsewhere, to other universities and copy material for their students (AS6,7,8,). One teacher expresses concern especially about the situation for the postgraduates (AS8), as he states they have to travel elsewhere to find the needed material. He also means that due to outdated material the postgraduates probably rely a lot on the internet.

The postgraduates that I have spoken to seemed to use the internet to some extent, but no to a great extent as there is a problem with access. Their experiences are that internet is not really working in the postgraduate library (PG2,4). Another teacher has a lengthy discussion about how insufficient the library is and that he cannot conduct teaching in a satisfying way because of this. He also expresses that the students have difficulties to learn because the classes are too large and that their level of English is poor (AS1). Further he expresses his frustration when discussing the lack of material in the library “A library is just not a building, there has to be things inside it as well” and “without a library you don’t have a university” (AS1). Thus he questions whether it is possible to proceed with education and that he feels strongly that the library needs a proper collection. Another teacher expressed some ideas about the actual education-situation in a similar way when he said that he through visiting other countries he has experienced that people elsewhere have another tradition of reading and producing more research (AS3). He also says that there is a problem with using English as the main language, he thinks this discourage people from reading and as it might become a barrier. This is an aspect of the current education-situation and a concern about this is present. The problem with the English language is also taken into consideration and as stated in the literature review, it might be a problem. As Tekeste Negash expressed the level of English might be too poor to use as a medium of instruction one can see that these teachers are also questioning if the level of English really is sufficient for carrying out teaching.

Generally people do not mention anything in particular about the service, whereas some express it as satisfactory (UG11,PG3,AS6,8) and mention that there are far worse problems as the ones already mentioned. One student express that he is not happy with the service as he experience the staff sometimes has difficulties finding the requested books (UG2). The teacher from the Faculty of Law (AS7) is disappointed with the service. He explains that the library is not properly organized and because of this he has spent too
many hours searching the library for books. The Law library is the library mentioned earlier without any proper shelving-system, so this is probably why this teacher is expressing his experiences of serious difficulties with the service. One student mentions that sometimes the library is not opened in time (UG13), a postgraduate student claims it is difficult to get help with finding books (PG2). At the same time many do not comment on the service which can be interpreted that they have no greater problems with the service. All in all it seems as it there is such a large problem with the lack of material in the library so that probably this is why people express more opinions about this than the actual service. The academic staff claims they rarely use the library, this might well be the case because they cannot find enough material for their research. Many of them express that there is a great problem with that it is a scarcity of journals. The problem of an inadequate number of copies concerning textbooks is probably not eased by the increased enrolments at the University. As one of the students said, that the problems remain the same and the only change is that there is a constant increase of students. This is probably not solving the problem with the deficit of copies. Another area that also can be discerned is that the communication between the library and its users is questioned, this will be even more evident in the next section that will now be presented.

- What change would you most like to see made to the library collections/services?
- Are you aware of that the library has a website, and that there is an online catalogue? Do you use the card-catalogue or the one in internet?

A large majority of the interviewees claim they most would like to see more textbooks and reference material, often more copies and new editions (UG1-14, PG2, AS1,2,3,5,8). Gaining access to internet is also very important (UG4,5,6,7, PG1,2).

For the students the matter of increased study space is important (UG1,4,5,6,7,9,11,12). Two postgraduate articulate that they find it problematic having to share a lot of facilities with the undergraduate students, they would like to see even more separated study area for themselves (UG1, PG1,4). Many mention that the ventilation is poor and that it becomes too hot and difficult to breath and they would like something to be done about this (UG,7,11,13,14, PG1). Two students mention they would like to see something being done about the noise, one of them states that she finds that there are now more
students in the library and that the level of noise therefore is getting worse (UG5,8).

Academic staff mentions that more and new hard copy journals are essential, these are the major obstacle for them in terms of carrying out research. (AS1,2,4,5,7,8). One teacher (AS3) mentions he would like to see more soft copies which strongly contrasts to what the other teachers said.

There are only a handful of persons, namely five, who are aware that the library has a web page and offers services from this platform in form of an online catalogue. All the interviewees state that they use the ordinary catalogue in the different libraries, no one stated that they used the catalogue online. In relation to this the use of e-journals can be mentioned. Among the users there is a similar situation with these as the online catalogue. Hardly anyone had heard that these exist and there does not seem to be anyone using these among the interviewees. Only one of the undergraduate students claims she knows about the online catalogue (UG10) and one of the postgraduate students state he is familiar with that there seems exists electronic resources. (PG1) In connection to this some of the respondents told me about the dissatisfaction concerning internet, either there are no computers or internet is not working. It is often shut down or the computers themselves are not working. (UG1,3,10,11,12, PG2,3) Three of the academic staff (AS3,6,7) mention they have some knowledge about the e-resources. Two of them point out that they some years ago had access to e-resources that they now are no longer connected to and they seem not to be familiar with the current offers. The academic staff who has a greater access to internet is also more familiar with the e-resources but do express that they have up to date information about the current situation. One of the teachers (AS6) expresses that he has the impression that they (the academic staff) used to receive clearer information about what was available through the library. He used to know when there were codes available to use for electronic journals etc., but now he states he is no longer familiar with this. However he also mentions that it is of little use, since it is quite an effort for him to access internet since he works in the Medical Faculty which is not even supplied with internet. AS2,3 mention that to start with there are not any work stations really at the libraries to use for this matter. Another teacher expressed a surprise when I showed him the web page of the library and the possibility of using the e-journals and said that they should inform about this and the needed codes to access the e-journals must be distributed. (AS2) At the moment one has to contact the library to obtain these codes. The most common comment among the users is that they do not have any access to either internet or actual
computers and therefore the catalogue and the e-resources are of little use to them. Not only is the barrier of access to a computer and internet discussed, but many complain about the slow connection to internet. One teacher expresses the problem with students not having access to either computers or internet as he says that 1000 students have to share ten computers. This means that they cannot of course really use the new library-system (AS7). Another teacher who has spoken earlier about the economically strained situation for the postgraduate students mention that the e-journals probably do not do any good since there are too many postgraduate students who need to partake. Meaning that internet and computers are not strong enough for this (AS8). All in all it is obvious that many users do not find much use of the online resources as the situation is today. This could also be concluded from the above section that dealt with the users’ satisfaction and the changes users would like to see where they particularly mentioned an increase of access to internet.

Often the interviewees who did not know about the online resources informed me that these probably did not exist, until I explained to them how these facilities worked. This illustrates how little information they have about the actual resources. One of the postgraduate students did in fact mention before we discussed the ICT-question that he would like to see a database with all the available books in the library so searching for a book would not be so time-consuming. He was very pleased to see that there actually is an online catalogue when I showed him this (PG4). The impact of the ICT-project and the project with the e-journals is rather low and consequently almost non-existent among the users. Therefore one can question the priority of the ICT-implementation if the users in the end do not notice its effects. Also one can question why e-journals are favoured when the access to these seem to be very low and postgraduate users and specifically the academic staff see the lack of journals as a big problem. This question underlines the difficulty with communication between the library and its users. This becomes obvious as many of the academic staff feel that they have not been informed about the potential resources.

**Summarize of the user interviews**

In short the results of the user study show that the users express their needs as unfulfilled by the library. There is at the same time among some of the users an awareness and understanding about what kind of conditions the library is working under. Many claim their needs as not being satisfied but at the same
some express that the library is rather fair taking the circumstances into consideration. One can view the replies of the users in the light of the guidelines from IFLA for the mission and goals of a library. The goals, mission and vision of the library have already been discussed and one could discern that most of the goals and mission within MU could be described as being quite vision-like. With this I mean that they state a more hopeful approach rather than really being strongly tied to the current reality of the library. Viewing the interviews from the guidelines of IFLA might enable one to examine how the mission and goals of the library are relating to the actual users and is a way of structuring the satisfaction of the users in different themes.

- **Collection**, to provide the information to the primary user group, according to its needs
  - The interviews show that many were unhappy with the situation concerning textbooks, they claimed there were neither enough copies nor any updated editions at a whole to speak of. Many still claim that the Library is ‘fair’ considering the working conditions.

- **Access**, to inform the user about the collection, provide access preferably through open stacks
  - Parts of the collection are in open stacks, which has been a recent change and described in a positive way by two students. A majority of the used books are in circulation and some books are distributed through an hour-loan system which means that there is a time-limit on reading some of the books. This is described as the students as rather stressful and put forward as example with the problem of the Library not being able to supply enough of books for the given classes. It is also difficult for the Library to give access to the electronic resources.

- **In - House Use**, to provide space for research and study in the library and adequate equipment
  - Many complain that there is not enough seating and that the ventilation is a problem. Among the students it is evident that many depend on the library and therefore they use the library to a great extent, some of them use it on a daily basis. Since the libraries are open almost the all day and night the opening hours must be described as very generous. Some students also express this change in a positive way. The library is thus widely used. One of the factors
behind this may be that students are not allowed to take any books outside of the building.

- **User - Education**, to inform about the services of the library, to assist its users in finding information and to provide reference service
  - No user education is currently being held. Although the interviews show that some think this might be useful. In connection to this it can be mentioned that the communication between the Library and its users does not seem to be clear, since few are for instance aware of the electronic services.

- **Storage and Preservation**, to store material as long as it is relevant for the institution, to provide appropriate housing for the material
  - This point in the guidelines is probably one of the points that has not evolved in the descriptive part in the study nor in the interviews concerning preservation in specific. The library has more urgent needs at the moment and perhaps this is something that will be illuminated as the library grows older, considering it has not yet been in existence for such a long period of time. One thing that can be mentioned is the shelving problem, there is not enough space at the moment in the library for the material. This might be solved though the new library-buildings that both users and staff mention are being constructed at the moment. The Head Librarian mentions that the donations to the Library are sometime rather irrelevant to the need of the Library’s users, therefore a lot of irrelevant material is taking up space. Many of the users comment upon the fact that there is not enough space and this can be connected to the aspect of storage, as these of course co-relate. Space is thus a problem which of course affects the question of storage.

**The interviews in the light of the library’s perspective**

Through the interview and the conversations with the Head Librarian it is possible to see that the library is in many respects aware of the users’ situation and ideas about the library. But there are some aspects that perhaps have not been taken into any consideration. The communication between the library and its users seems in this example to be a central aspect.

The Head Librarian describes there is a problem with the supply of textbooks, meaning not enough copies and a scarcity in recent editions. Further
he suggests that this could be solved with a supplement of e-books or by printing books from CD's. “Hard copy books are luxury”, and an idea of taking a step away from actual books can be discerned. At the same time the Head Librarian is approaching the problem in different ways. Not only depending on the electronic aspect and he tries to tackle the problem with relevance of the collection and hard copies by attempting to give donors outlines, categories of what is needed in the library.

As mentioned earlier the Head Librarian finds the current acquisition system as far too time consuming and wishes that the publishers could be contacted directly instead of having to bid. Speaking about the process of acquisition he mentions that within the framework of the Belgian project it has been suggested that MU should to some extent have its own publishing business, which is similar to what was suggested in the case study of Addis Ababa, since local publishing might ease up the actual access to material. Also this might be an idea in order to strengthen the local ideas and not be dependent on a western framework for both publishing-business and a western framework of ideas that colour the material. This has been highlighted by a postcolonial approach. Cooperation among libraries in Ethiopia in terms of an inter library loan service is mentioned by the Head Librarian as something that will be needed and developed in the future.

In terms of user education nothing is really offered, though it is expressed that there will be in the future. Announcements and information about the services of the library are posted on a notice board in each library. The Head Librarian also mentions that he has at some point visited the Post Graduate Library and has spoken to students there to find out what they think. For instance one of the results was the acquisition of more comfortable chairs. The interviews show that the channels of communication are a failure, as few know about the online services for instance. Visiting the post graduates in their learning environment once in a while is probably essential in order to see what they need but it might not be enough in order to find out their preferences. Regular user education may improve contact on a regular basis. Since the post graduate students point out they have little help of what is offered through the internet, this might be something that serves as a useful insight for the library to consider. This is something that might be revealed through an increased contact and user education. This can also be applied to the academic staff as they claim that they do not know what is offered. Clear channels for online information could thus be established to a further extent than is the case today. Again, one should remember that the Head Librarian maintains that the Library is working
on a more user-orientated approach and that he is hoping to create orientation-introductions. In the draft for the strategic plan user education can be seen, which my user-study showed was wanted by some. The mentioned visits to the Post Graduate Library by the Head Librarian could be one approach to consider. These could be advertised so that the users could be sure to meet the Head Librarian and discuss needs and possible future changes.

The IUC programme has introduced many things such as education for librarians and digitalisation of the collections. A problem with the later point though is, as the Head Librarian also emphasises, the problem with bandwidth. Internet is slow, and as the users have expressed access is all but problem-free. Because of this strong desire for an ICT-implementation of course can be considered as a great need. The Head Librarian speaks of the potential of using the electronic form when one has no books or other printed material, which really is a good point. However, to offer material in an electronic format while there is no proper access can be questioned. He also states that it is almost impossible for the Library to purchase journals, especially because of the bid-system for acquisition. While discussing the ICT-aspect it is worth mentioning that according to the Head Librarian, Mekelle University is one of the universities with the highest number of user rates within the PERI programme. This contrasts greatly to the group I interviewed, who really did not use this service, which of course might raise the question if the selected group of users is representative. At the same time one can question the high usage of PERI at other universities, perhaps the usage is low on one whole, unfortunately I do not have access to these statistics. However, in relation to this area the Head Librarian states that “we need the ICT-service more than anything (...) that’s why the ICT-project is important”\textsuperscript{102}. He sees the potential of using e-resources and wants to supplement the printed books with e-books. At the same time he is well aware of the problem about access. However it seems the library estimates more people are actually using the electronic services (not only the sources available through PERI) than the result of the interviews show.

One of the greatest needs for the Library according to the Head Librarian is educated personal. Especially for the electronic aspect, otherwise the ICT-implementation will be useless. He mentions that there has been a problem of manpower and that the constant change of personnel has been a great problem

\textsuperscript{102} Interview 2007-02-08 with Head Librarian, Mekelle.
since it is hard to establish continuity in the work of the library and unnecessary
time is spent on training staff that soon disappear.

In terms of the relation to the university the Head Librarian express that the
University is supportive to the undertakings of the Library.
Summarising Discussion

In this section the results of the study will be discussed in relation to the purpose of the thesis. The main purpose of this thesis is to illuminate how the Mekelle University Library (MUL) is constructed and how it is experienced from the view of its users, i.e. the students and academic staff. Also, it aims at demonstrating the relation between library and education. The main questions to reach the main purpose were:

- How do the users experience the library, is their information need being met?
- How does the university and library interact, what kind of resources are the library given? And with this in mind,
- How is the library responding to its mission statement and goals according to the users’ point of view?

The questions have been discussed throughout in the Investigation chapter. It is now time to summarize and analyse the results. Firstly, the findings will be discussed in the following way: The satisfaction among the users and this will be discussed in relation to the IFLA guidelines concerning the mission statement and goals. Thereafter comparisons with the case studies report, with a special attention to the case of Addis Ababa University Library will be reviewed. Furthermore, previous research will also be discussed in comparison to the results of my study. Finally the relation between the library and the current education system will be discussed. Suggestions and ideas concerning the library and its actions are also brought forward continuously throughout this chapter.

Quality is a concept which can be difficult to define. If one is to consider quality in the manner IFLA discusses it, quality lies within the opinions of the users. Quality of the MUL can be described in several ways. Many users claim that they are not satisfied or at least not completely satisfied. At the same time many also mention that they find the situation “fair”. What can be seen is
perhaps that the users’ expectations are moderate, therefore this may have an impact on their judgement of MUL. Nevertheless, one shall not forget that some users seem rather satisfied. Even if many users describe that they are not overwhelmingly satisfied with the library some point out that at the same time they still find the library reasonable given the circumstance it is working under.

When taking the IFLA-guidelines into consideration one can discuss the mission statement in relation and the satisfaction as follows: The idea is that the mission statement is to embrace the needs and satisfaction of the users. This in the end creates the actual purpose for the library and determines its quality.

One can say that, when disregarding that the mission statement is more of a vision statement since it includes many aspects that one can hope that the library submits to rather than issues that are taking place in the current situation, the library responds to some degree to their mission statement. The users state, as mentioned, that they to some extent are satisfied. At the same time they speak continuously and extensively about the problems they face in the library in terms of collection and facilities. The students have little space to study in, and as the statistics show there are more than seven students per seat.

When considering the collection there is a strong opinion that the need for hard copies must be prioritised, including both textbooks and journals. The digitalisation process is in progress and has come along way. However, due to the fact the users have many problems with access in terms of too few computers and problems with bandwidth, this in the end has little effect.

In comparison with the case study report on African university libraries a lot of the results are valid as in the case with MU library. One should also take into consideration that the report dates ten years back. The current situation is thus closely related to that one of ten years ago. Following similarities can be seen:

- Users are dissatisfied with lack of textbooks and new editions of these as well as the insufficiency of periodicals.
- There is a communication problem the libraries have difficulties to inform their users about available resources.
- There is hardly any user education.
- An Increase in enrolments of students.

One should treat the few statistic comparisons with Addis Ababa University with scepticism, due to a number of factors I previously have discussed, such as that MU is a significantly younger university than the one of Addis Ababa. Similar problems seem to be prevailing though. This can be interpreted as that
the MUL is quickly establishing itself as a library and is working with initial
problems and in this light, it is coming close to the work of an institution that
already has been working within the area for a long time. Or it can be
interpreted as that the situation of university libraries in Ethiopia has had little
improvement during the period of time in between the two studies.

Before continuing to make comparisons with previous research I want to
point out that the library is working in an economically strained environment
and this of course has be taken into consideration. At the same time one shall
remember that education and institutions like libraries are fundamental pillars
for a prosperous country. Increased enrolments can be seen in both cases. As
the library is already working in a strained environment, the increased
enrolments might not ease the situation. There is a need for more copies of
reference textbooks in both studies also, as this is shown in both studies the
earlier mentioned co-relating increase of enrolments can surely be related to
this. The communication aspect is also dominating and this can also be related
to the issues of user education and to some extent access to certain services.
First of all it might be an idea to establish a channel of communication where
users can turn to the Library and discuss their feelings about the library. In this
way the library would gain knowledge of what the users prioritise, and through
this a more user-orientated approach could be developed. If user education is
implemented there would perhaps be an increase in communication since the
library and users would meet and discuss library-related issues. The case of
problems with communication can as mentioned be seen concerning that the
users do not know about certain services, as the electronic resources. The
aspect of electronic resources at MUL can also be seen in the light of the article
by Diana Rosenberg where she mentions the development of IT in Africa and
that it cannot exclude the need of hard copy books. This could be considered in
the case of MU, in relation to what has been stated earlier considering
textbooks and journals. Hard copies are what the users mainly are requesting.
IT might be tempting to implement as a solution due to its possibilities with
easy access to material. It is important but before one can fully rely on it, access
has to be guaranteed to all the users.

Diana Rosenberg also discusses lack of funding and lack of trained staff.
This is something that can be seen at MUL, where the staff lacks adequate
education to a great extent. Although a change within this can be seen. With the
help of the IUC-programme staff has had the opportunity to undergo training.
This will hopefully help the library in the process of organizing things, as the
shelving system at the Library of Law for instance and this is also necessary if
the library is to develop a catalogue with subject headings for instance. The increase of skilled staff who can make guidelines for the work of the library is something to look forward to. It might then also be possible to review and improve the managing of statistics as these may serve as a base for future reviews that can be carried out by the library itself. And from this it is possible to establish guidelines etc. that may improve the library.

In line with other universities in Africa the MUL does not seem to have sufficient financial support from the university. This is difficult to discuss though, since the library partly is supported on a governmental level. Therefore, there lies difficulties within saying whether or not the library receives six percent of the university budget Still, one shall remember while discussing the terms for budget and financing that the Head Librarian experiences the relationship to the university as supportive.

The IUC programme has recently supported activities in the library-field. As is stated in the literature review, it is of interest that the institution itself acknowledges the need for a strong library since this is a central pillar of an education. Long-term commitment is thus essential, and occasional aid and donations should be treated with carefulness. If the university rely to a great extent on subsidiary aid for resources to the library this can be questioned. The library needs strong recognition otherwise it is difficult to pursue a mission of enabling education and knowledge for students and academic staff. One can see that the IUC programme contains an idea of establishing a functional, library, as this is included in the overall programme. The support to the digitalising process of the library and educating and training staff is definitely a long term project that might lead to a sustainable development of the library. The importance of the original support and responsibility from the mother institution should not be forgotten though according to what has been stated earlier in the Literature Review this is ultimately the responsibility of the institution with a permanent relation to the library that might create a sustainable development.

Of course much of the problem lies in area of finances, but the university must see that there lies a difficulty in increasing the number of students at a moment when the current need of the students and academic staff is far from being fulfilled. Moreover, there is also a need to put in question the focus on ICT as a prioritised measure if a fair share of the target group is not affected by this. Having said this, I am not questioning the actual automation process of the library as this ultimately will be of great help and probably make the service even better in the future, what I want to underline is that, since there is a
problem of access and infrastructure concerning computers and network, reliance on electronic resources as the answer to the user’s needs becomes rather complicated. The electronic way of searching and distributing information is an important aspect within structuring information resources, especially in developing countries since this might in the end be a sustainable and easy way of updating material in a faster and more economic advantageous way. In order to carry a successful digitalisation of an information collection like a library and in order to rely upon this service, it must be supported by a stable functioning network and accessibility to this. The problem of access thus needs to be solved as many of the users I have spoken to claim that they really cannot partake of these services. To aim for e-books and e-journals at this moment therefore might be too early in the process. At the same time there is an acute need for textbooks and journals, this is what all the interviewees are demanding. Library,

What is evident with this study is that the problems of the current education system can be seen in the light of the library. Naturally the situation of the library affects the users, in many ways more than one thinks at first. For instance, one of the teachers way of working can be mentioned. The library becomes a part of a situation where the way of gaining knowledge becomes reversed. The teacher searches the library to see what is available for the students and from this he creates his courses. Consequently, I mean that the search of knowledge becomes reversed since the material available in the library sets the agenda for what will be taught and at the end of the day, learned. Thus, the available material sets the limits. This becomes more apparent in an environment like this since there is not material in abundance. This is of course somewhat limiting and may result in a rather narrow approach to knowledge for the students. It is obvious that the teacher in question does not have much choice, he has to take into consideration what is actually available to the students. What will happen if even more students are enrolled before the current situation of the library is resolved should therefore be taken seriously. The interviews show that in the present situation students do not obtain all the material they really need for their studies; they are sometimes only allowed to use some material for an hour due to that there is an insufficient amount of copies and they have to use out of obsolete books etc. Another aspect is the quality of the material, one teacher mentions there must be a strain for the eyes reading copied books.

To increase the number of students in the current situation without putting in more resources, organise and structure the information in the libraries in a
more adequate and user-friendly way (which employing knowledgeable staff could facilitate), to work on the priorities of the library should focus on etc. may make the current situation even worse. The academic staff expresses the deficit of journals and up to date material. It is almost impossible for them to conduct research without this. At the same time the library in fact offers access to many e-journals but this is unknown to a majority of the interviewees. Thus there could be a prevailing form of miscommunication leading to insufficient distribution of information. Here one should keep in mind though, that my user-group cannot be taken as overall representative, as the Head Librarian claims that MU has the highest user-rates within the PERI project. Still the fact remains that the users I have talked to who could actually take advantage of this service, are not familiar with it. This might be relieved by introducing user education for instance and by creating clear policies on what channels to use for information and communication between the library and the users.

Betty Marton also spoke about how one can discern how the mode of studying has changed to a much less independent way of working. Specifically she mentioned that the services of the library consequently were not requested in the same way anymore as the less independent mode of research being taught in the classrooms affects the library. This might well be the case of MU, taking into consideration that most students emphasize the need of textbooks might suggest that they are following the same pattern mentioned by Marton. Few spoke about different sources and many mentioned lecture notes as a source, which can be interpreted as that this is one of the major sources for them. Therefore it is possible to say that the students at MU fit into the same picture proposed by the likes of Marton and Negash claiming that the current mode of education as such – can be criticised.

It is evident that the library is working in the lines of trying to embrace their users in different ways. For example, through offering persons with physical disabilities to take place in a couple of the libraries with special rooms. Also through working with the aspect of making females more welcome to a study environment that to large parts have been dominated by men, by offering Female Reading Rooms. Improving the opening hours and making more of the collection accessible through open stacks have been appreciated among the users. It is through undertakings like this that one can see that the library naturally is concerned about its users, but still some aspects are problematic. Perhaps the library is in need of clear guidelines concerning what should be its priorities. Hardly the library alone is to blame for the imbalance of material in the library and the many enrolments of students. This of course
partly has to do with the politics of the current education system. This study can be seen as illuminating the need of the mother institution and the library having a close relationship and to cooperate. Meaning that the library together with the university can get an idea of what is most needed by the users of the library and this knowledge can be used as a base for outlining the priorities of the library.
Summary

The purpose of this study was to illuminate how the Mekelle University Library (MUL) is constructed and how it is experienced from the view of its users, i.e. the students and academic staff. This was carried out through studying the structure of the library. Namely through its collection, resources and work, also through conducting interviews with a minor selection of the users at the university. The study also aimed at demonstrating the relation between library and education.

The framework for the thesis was inspired by elements from evaluation studies within Library and Information Science and utilized guidelines from IFLA concerning the fulfilment of the mission statement of a library. The methodology was in form of a case study and took the matter of context into consideration and therefore several aspects of the library were viewed. The study was divided into two parts, the first part covered the structure and work of the library and the second part focused on the users’ view of the library. Sources used for the first part were documents concerning budget and enrolments of students, a draft for a strategic plan for the library composed by the Head Librarian. Also, an interview and conversations were conducted with the very same person. The sources for the second part were interviews with a selection of graduate and postgraduate students as well as academic staff.

The library is serving almost 20 000 and students and has in similarity with what previous research concerning university libraries in Africa have stated, some difficulties with serving its users, partly due to the lack of financing. The resources are not in abundance, and the library receives outside support from an ongoing Inter University Programme with a Flemish university. This has helped the library to launch a digitalisation of the library. Although one shall not underestimate the importance of having a functional financial support from the mother institution since this might involve a more sustainable development and support. There are few persons in the staff with relevant training in Library and Information Science. The library has difficulties in supplying hard copy textbooks and journals. These results coincide with what earlier studies
concerning this area have concluded. It bears strong resemblances to a case study that was carried out about ten years ago dealing with Addis Ababa University Library. The electronic resources are difficult to use due to problems with access to both computers and problems with bandwidth. There are many steps to be taken before the electronic resources and services can be used on a full scale. Therefore one should be careful with mainly focusing on the development of this. A majority of the users describe themselves as partly or not completely satisfied. A consideration of context and understanding of the economic environment the library is working within, can be seen by many users. If one takes the guidelines of IFLA into consideration concerning the users’ satisfaction, one can say that library is partly fulfilling their mission. Researchers are strongly concerned with that they do not have access to hard copy journals since this is essential for their research, they experience difficulties with using electronic material due too problems with access. The academic staff wants just like the students, updated material and more copies of textbooks.

The library can be described as being rather aware of the current situation among the users, although the communication between the library and its users probably needs improvement. For instance the library to some extent seems to have difficulties with letting users know about their services. Also, as mentioned, the library is yet to early relying too much on the electronic resources which cannot be fully accessed by the users, which a majority of the users mention.

Many students seem to rely on lecture-notes to a large extent and it is possible to interpret the current situation in relation to previous research that there is a repetitive nature in the current education system. The possibility to conduct independent learning seems difficult due to lack of material. A further increase of student enrolments which can currently be seen, will hardly make the situation better.
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Appendix

Questions to the Head Librarian, interview 2007-02-08, Mekelle.

• What is your mission statement?
• What is your procedure for acquisition, how do you select the material, has it changed anything, e-journals, databases are these continuous subscriptions?
• How does the library meet the need for undergraduate textbooks?
• Which method for the acquisition do you prefer?
• Do you share resources, interlibrary loan service with other institutions/libraries?
• Which part of your collection is most used and by which category of reader? Which is not used? How much weeding do you do?
• In what way would you like to improve the collection and the library?
• What new library services have been introduced? Any discontinued?
• What do you think about user education/introduction?
• The changes with the IUC programme? What does it mean to the library and its users? Do you think the online catalogue is widely used and by whom?
• How is the library funded?
• Are university authorities/government becoming more or less supportive of library activities?
• Does the library seek donor support independently?
• In that case, under what terms do you get the support?
• Which donor programme has been most successful?
• Which donor programme has been least successful?
• Have there been any changes in the recruitment/training of library staff?
• What type of training has been most valuable to the library?
What type of training has been least valuable to the library?
What knowledge or skills are lacking in the library?
How can the staff be improved?
Have you had any evaluation studies like performance measurement or strategic planning?
Any user satisfaction survey?
What has been the greatest achievement of the library?
Greatest failure?
What is the library’s greatest need at the moment, why?
Are you in contact with other university libraries in Ethiopia?
How would you rate your library in comparison?
Do you feel that your views on library development are taken into account by the university authorities?
Do you think any cutbacks could be made and still the library still can fulfil the mission? -fewer staff?
Could the library make acquisitions locally in a further extent and not in such a great extent use material produced in the west?