Digital usage soars at Makerere University library.

By Joshua Turyatemba

The Makerere University main library has registered its highest of number of users, since the development of an online resource facility. Incorporating the e-resource and journal databases, the online resource project started in 2000 with 0.94m USD funding from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). Since then, the facility has enabled Makerere to keep abreast with the rest of the research and academic world.

Up to 2000, the university subscribed to less than less than 100 journals. But since the online resource initiative, the number of titles has risen, many of which are e-journals. By the beginning of 2009, the number of full text e-journals had increased to 35,000, from 8000 seven years earlier.

Further still, through collaboration with the Carnegie Corporation the university procured 271 titles of e-books in science and gender studies.

With just a click of a button, a library user is now able to access the entire library collection online at http://libis.mak.ac.ug. The virtual integrated library system under which the application operates helps one find out the books available at the library without his/her physical presence. While inside the library, visitors have access to 330 workstations and 60 terminals.

To make resources even more accessible to users, the main library introduced Document Delivery services. This enables users to apply for documents or articles that may not yet be available in the library. In partnership with the University of Tennessee, the University of Bergen and the British library, the books are then procured and sent to the library.

According to Dr. Maria Musoke, the university librarian, the library is now headed for a model academic unit, following their emergence as winner of yet another competitive grant from Carnegie Corporation which focuses on library automation. Today, Makerere University's institutional repository on Uganda Scholarly Digital Library-USDL is at 170 full text digital records.

USDL is a collection of scientific research publications from the major science institutions in Uganda. This has enhanced the visibility of the university on the web. A digital musical archive has been set up as well for people interested in that area.

A part of the Carnegie Corporation facilitation was to help train university staff in computer literacy, which was achieved 100 percent. As a result, some of the staff have helped in library automation in Nigeria and the Juba Library Automation Project.