The Law Development Centre, its Library and Law Librarianship in Uganda: a presentation to the IALS Library staff

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1.0   Personal Introduction

1.1   Academic Qualifications

I am a graduate of Makerere University[1] with a BA (Economics & Political Science) Degree. I was later to acquire a Post Graduate Diploma in Librarianship and Master of Science in Information Science Degree from the East African School of Library and Information Science in the same University.

1.2   Employment

I was recruited at the Law Development Centre as an Assistant Librarian Trainee in 1992. On acquiring experience and librarianship qualifications I was later confirmed as an Assistant Librarian; then Senior Librarian/ Deputy Head, Library; Principal Librarian/Ag. Head; and currently Chief Librarian/Head, Library Department. Over the years I have done all a librarian going up the ranks can do including giving academic support services, training internees, reference work, acquisition, processing and supervision of staff. Currently I am mainly involved in managerial work.

2.0   A Brief on the Law Development Centre

In 1969, the Gower Committee on Legal education[2] which was set up by Uganda Government recommended that there should be a separation between university legal education and practical legal training. It clarified that practical legal training was necessary for lawyers after the broad based university legal education. The Gower Report elucidated that an institution be established where law graduates can be given practical training through small groups (firms) and internship. Consequently, in 1970, the Law Development Centre Act, Cap 132[3] was enacted and under this Act, the Law Development Centre (LDC) was established.

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[1] Makerere University is Uganda's oldest university founded way back in 1922 by the British during the Colonial Era.

[2] LEGAL EDUCATION IN UGANDA – A Report to the Attorney-General by Gower, L.C.B. et al: December, 1968 - January, 1969.
The Government having become acutely aware that Uganda does not have its own facilities for educating prospective lawyers and also that the standards of the legal profession are open to improvement, invited three distinguished lawyers, namely Professor L.C.B.Gower, of the Law Commission, London, Professor Quintin Johnstone, Dean of the Faculty of Law at Haile Selassie 1 University, Addis Ababa, and Professor R.B. Stevens, of Yale University, to study and report on Legal Education in Uganda.
[3] LAWS OF UGANDA (In force on 31st December, 2000) Revised Edition, 2000 - Volume VI; Chapter 132, THE LAW DEVELOPMENT CENTRE ACT; Page 3042.

Gower envisaged a practical training institution with a broader mandate[4] to carry out a number of activities. Section 3 of the Act outlines the functions of Law Development Centre thus:

(a) Organizing and conducting courses of instruction for the acquisition of legal knowledge, professional skill and experience by persons intending to practice as attorneys in subjects which shall have been determined by the Law Council under the provisions of any law in force;

(b) Organizing and conducting courses in legislative drafting;

(c) Organizing and conducting courses for magistrates;

(d) Organizing and conducting training courses for officers of the Government and members of the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces with a view to promoting a better understanding of the law;

(e) Organizing and conducting courses for officers and personnel of courts with a view to improving their efficiency;

(f) Assisting any commissioner who may be appointed in the preparation and publication of a revised edition of the Laws of Uganda;

(g) Assisting in the preparation of reprints of Acts of Parliament;

(h) Assisting the Law Reform Commission in the performance of its functions;

(i) Undertaking any research into any branch of law;

(j) Holding seminars and conferences on legal matters and problems;

(k) Collecting, compiling, analyzing and abstracting statistical information on legal and related matters;

(l) Assisting in the provision of legal aid and advice to indigent litigants and accused persons;

(m) Compiling, editing and publishing law reports for Uganda;

(n) Publishing periodicals, bulletins, digests or other written materials concerned with legal and related matters; and

(o) Disseminating and promoting generally a better knowledge of the law.

Since 1970, the Law Development Centre has carried out all its functions and particularly trained many lawyers and government officers in its Department of Post Graduate Legal Studies, Diploma in Law programme and through the Continuous Legal Education programme.

LDC is under the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs and has the following sources of funding:

(a) grants by the Government

(b) internally generated revenue and

(c) donors

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[4] There is currently a debate whether the LDC Act should not be amended and the broad mandate of the institution greatly reduced to its core function of training lawyers and educating paralegals.

The population of students has increased over the years and overstretched LDC's facilities which were meant to cater for an average of 60 students on the Bar Course and about 80 students on the Diploma in Law Course. In the 2008/2009 academic year there were about 600 students on the Bar Course alone. There is limited classroom space and limited financial resources to run the institution because government has for the last 13 years been given a subvention of Uganda Shillings 1.17 billion per year as a non-wage bill. No financial resources have been allocated to LDC by Government for capital development. However, the Justice Law and Order Sector (JLOS)[5] assisted LDC by providing funding for capital development. This money was used to construct 5 firm rooms, a training hall and another more spacious library building. But the Diploma in Law[6] classes are still lacking lecture rooms. The students are taught from a hall near the main administration offices which is not a very conducive place for learning.

LDC has endeavored for many years to have its grant from Government increased in view of the increasing number of students, activities and changes in the economic conditions in the country but without success. It is pertinent that the funding be increased, facilities expanded and the Law Development Centre Act be amended to relieve the institution of some responsibilities which other bodies are currently performing like the training of magistrates and law reform function.

2.1 Challenges

The major challenges facing LDC are **inadequate funding** and **inadequate physical facilities.** The existing physical facilities at LDC were intended for a small population of students. In the 1970s the Bar Course programme had less than 40 students in a class. In the 1980s and up to 1996/1997 academic year, the average number of students in a Bar Course class was 60. However, from the 2000s the number of students in a class increased due to liberalization of

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[5] Uganda's Justice Law and Order Sector (JLOS) is a significant innovation now in operation for over 10 years as a holistic Government approach focused on improving the administration of justice, maintenance of law and order as well as the promotion, protection and respect of human rights. JLOS is therefore a sector wide approach adopted by Government bringing together institutions with closely linked mandates of administering justice and maintaining law and order and human rights, into developing a common vision, policy framework, unified on objectives and plan over the medium term. It focuses on a holistic approach to improving access to and administration of justice through the sector wide approach to planning, budgeting, programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The sector comprises of: Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs (MOJCA); Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA); The Judiciary; Uganda Police Force (UPF); Uganda Prison Service (UPS); Directorate of Public Prosecutions (DPP); Judicial Service Commission (JSC); The Ministry of Local Government (Local Council Courts); The Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development (Probation and Juvenile Justice); The Uganda Law Reform Commission (ULRC); The Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC); The Law Development Centre (LDC); The Tax Appeals Tribunal (TAT); The Uganda Law Society (ULS); Centre for Arbitration and Dispute Resolution (CADER) and The Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB)

[6] Unlike the Postgraduate Diploma in Legal Practice offered to graduate lawyers the Diploma and Law Program is designed for paralegals, government officials and any other person who want some basic understanding law.

university education which saw Makerere University Faculty of Law starting an evening programme for law. Other Universities like Uganda Christian University, Mukono also started offering law. Hence admission for the Bar Course increased greatly.

LDC Students' Admission from 1985 – 2011

S/NO.	Academic Year	Bar Course	Diploma in Law
1.	1985/1986	60	28
2.	1986/1987	50	38
3.	1987/1988	61	48
4.	1988/1989	60	62
5.	1989/1990	60	46
6.	1990/1991	60	42
7.	1991/1992	61	60
8.	1992/1993	60	55
9.	1993/1994	66	51
10.	1994/1995	63	26
11.	1995/1996	67	35
12.	1996/1997	60	224
13.	1997/1998	188	219
14.	1998/1999	175	227
15.	1999/2000	184	245
16.	2000/2001	186	332
17.	2001/2002	190	598
18.	2002/2003	239	356
19.	2003/2004	362	267

20.	2004/2005	335	380
21.	2005/2006	347	412
22.	2006/2007	580	758
23.	2007/2008	586	383
24.	2008/2009	609	453
25.	2009/2010	600	357
26.	2010/2011	321	360
27.	2011/2012	423	518

As indicated above, the highest number of students on the Bar Course were from 2006/2007 to 2009/2010 academic years. When the LDC Bar Course pre-entry tests were introduced in 2010, the student population on the Bar Course dropped to 321 because more than half of the applicants failed the pre-entry tests. The Diploma in Law students and administrative officers also add to the population of people at the institution. Consequently, the student population is currently over nine hundred and the structures are not adequate for both students and staff. Staff residences at Law Development Centre were turned into offices. The LDC rooms which were hitherto accommodating students were turned into offices from the late 1990s. The Library is completely overwhelmed with inadequate reading materials, reading room and storage room.

2.2   Vision and Mission

In view of the immense challenges and problems facing the institution and its departments, especially the library the vision and mission of the institution are forged thus:

Vision: To be the Centre for Quality Legal Training & High Academic, Professional & Ethical Standards.

Mission: To Review, Restructure and Modernize Centre Programs & Services.

Particularly revealing as to what is currently going on in the institution is this mission. Departments like the library are now being literally overhauled.

3.0   LDC Law Library

This library exists to facilitate the Academic, Training & Research Functions of the Centre by providing relevant & timely legal information using both traditional means and modern

technology. The library being the best equipped and organized in the country also serves students from universities offering law and the legal fraternity including advocates, judges, magistrates, scholars/researchers and government officials. It also attracts a lot of foreign visitors. It would most appropriately be called a national law library.

Vision: To be a One-Stop State-of-the-Art Legal Resource Centre Providing Access to Legal Information Resources.

3.1   Library Sections and Organization

- **Reading Room** – until 2009 when the total student population had clocked 900 the library could only accommodate 80 users in its reading room. With a new premises in place it can now provide 230 seats.

- **Section 1:** Periodicals (Law Reports, Unreported Cases, Forms/Precedents, journals, reviews)

- **Section 2:** Text Books & Legislation

- **Section 3:** Archives

- **Section 4:** Computer Laboratory; Electronic Resources

- **Section 5:** Acquisitions & Processing

3.2   Library Staff

All the staff have library qualifications ranging from Diploma in Librarianship, Bachelor of Library and Information Science to Master of Science in Information Science. Originally nine, the number came down to five librarians on permanent terms and three on part-time following a recent restructuring exercise in the organization. One of the staff even has a Diploma in Law which is particularly helpful considering the fact that there is no such a thing as training in law librarianship.

The library attracts an average of three internees annually as well as volunteers. This helps somewhat in grappling with the staff gap. Currently, the ratio of staff to patrons is actually one librarian to 200 students besides teaching staff and users of the library from outside the Centre.

The current staff line-up therefore occupies the following posts:

- Chief Librarian/Head of Department
- Librarian/Deputy Head
- Assistant Librarian (3)
- Part Time staff including 2 Assistant Librarians and 1 IT Technician
- Secretary

- Security Personnel
- Cleaner

3.3 Stock

The stock reflects the Common Law Systems[7] used in Uganda, the type of training offered in the institution and the information needs of the legal fraternity.

The collections are organized using the **Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme (DDC) - 22nd Edition.** There are over 19,494 textbooks and 15,307 law reports and journals. The library also stocks several documents used in the administration of justice and unreported judgments from all courts in the country.

The following constitute categories of the different types of reading materials available in the LDC Library:

- **Text Books** on all Subject Matter in Law. These subjects include Law of Nations (International Law); Constitutional & Administrative Law; Military, Defence, Public Property, Public Finance, Tax, Commerce (trade), Industrial Law; Labor, Social Service, Education, Cultural Law; Criminal Law; Private Law; Civil Procedure & Courts.

- **Law Reports[8]:** These include All England Law Reports, Appeal Cases, Times Law Reports, Weekly Law Reports, Law Reports of the Commonwealth, Commonwealth Human Rights Law Reports, Kings Bench/Queens Bench Divisions, Probate, Family Division, Butterworth Medico-Legal Reports, Chancery Appeals, Admiralty & Divorce Appeals, Privy Council Appeals, Scotch & Divorce Appeals, Admiralty & Ecclesiastical Law Reports, Scotch & Divorce Appeals, English & Irish Appeals, Common Pleas, Crown Cases Reserved, Exchequer, Criminal Appeal Reports, Equity Law Reports.
  The **local/regional reports** include the Uganda Law Reports, East Africa Law Reports, Kampala Law Reports, African Law Reports, Kenya Law Reports, High Court Bulletins (1966-2009), Uganda Law Society Law Reports, Uganda Commercial Law Reports, East African Court of Appeal Reports (EACA), Kenya Law Reports, East African Protectorate Law Reports.
- **Reviews** and **Journals** include East Africa Law Review, Uganda Law Society Law Review, Uganda Law Focus, Makerere Law Journal, Commonwealth Law Bulletin, Cambridge Law Journal, Uganda Living Journal, East African Journal of Peace and Human Rights, Commonwealth Law Bulletin, New Times Law Digest.

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[7] Common law and equity are legal systems where decisions by courts are explicitly acknowledged to be legal sources. The "doctrine of precedent", or *stare decisis* (Latin for "to stand by decisions") means that decisions by higher courts bind lower courts. Common law systems also rely on statutes, passed by the legislature, but may make less of a systematic attempt to codify their laws than in a "civil law" system. Common law originated from England and has been inherited by almost every country [including Uganda] once tied to the British Empire. (Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law#Common_law_and_equity)

[8] The only up-to-date law report in the library is the All England Law Reports series.

- **Forms and Precedents:** Encyclopaedia of Forms & Precedents, Atkins Court Forms

- Documents used in the Administration of Justice in Uganda including

- Laws of Uganda[9] and Halsbury's Laws of England (3rd & 4th Editions)

- Papers (presented during seminars/workshops/conferences), Articles and Legal Institutions' Reports.

- Unreported Cases from all Courts

- **Teaching materials** which include all reading/research materials submitted by the lecturers in connection with subjects of instruction. These include court documents, unreported cases, articles, seminar papers, etc.

Closed Access System

Ideally the library should be using an open access system. This however is not the case. A closed access system is operated especially to help share reading materials, manage the pressure on inadequate resources, and reduce the risk that materials could be hoarded, stolen and even mutilated if users had direct access to them.

3.4   Electronic Resources & Systems

The use of electronic resources is a nascent development that the institution in partnership with development partners has been keen to support. As a matter of fact one of the strategic objective[10] of the Centre is indicative of this reality.

The following demonstrate use of and development of electronic resources in the library:

- **Computer Laboratory** – this is a new development. This Laboratory is the equivalent of the IALS **Electronic Legal Research Unit** and it has 35 computers. It was set up with donor funding. In addition to the online legal research undertaken here this lab is also used for the training of staff and users on how to access electronic resources.

- **Internet Connectivity** - the library and institution as a whole has full time internet connectivity. The speed of the connection however leaves a lot to be desired.

- **Subscription** – The library subscribes to the following sites:

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[9] Laws of Uganda from the colonial times (1910) to date. The colonial legislation constitute rare, highly valued & archival material.

[10] LDC Strategic Objective 5: **To Integrate ICT in all LDC programmes and processes in accordance with the international ICT standards by the year 2013**

- **Jstor**: for electronic law journals. Access is free to strictly academic institutions of higher learning.
- **ULI** (Uganda Legal Information Institute) and **SAFLII** (South African Legal Information Institute): these sites cover the Eastern and Southern Africa region and are the equivalent of BAILII (British + Irish Legal Information Institute) providing online primary legal materials. Access is also free.
- **Uganda Online Law Library:** this is paid for and provides primary legal materials including legislation, unreported cases from all courts and documents used in the administration of justice.
- **Law Africa Legal Database:** this is also paid for and provides access to judgments from all courts in the East African region.

- **Compact Discs:** This is a burgeoning area with only the following discs in stock:
  - Laws of Uganda 2000 Edition
  - All England Law Reports 1936-2011
  - East African Law Reports
  - Human Rights & Manual Resource Book for Africa 2005 *by Stamer & Christou*
  - Unreported High Court & Commercial Court Cases – 1997-2007
  - Legislative Drafting Course Material for the Pacific – Developed & *Prepared by Bates Enterprises Ltd for the Commonwealth Secretariat @ London,*

- **Digitized texts:**
  Following a successful bid by the National Library of Uganda (NLU) to participate in the World Digital Library Project[11] - 2010 several libraries including the LDC Law Library in Uganda were mobilized to provide the appropriate materials for digitization. From LDC the following rare reading materials of immense historical/cultural value were duly digitized. And since the library currently does not have the capacity to carry out such a technical exercise they constitute the only materials thus put in this format. These include:
  - Native Laws of Buganda (1941) by Matthew, Charles & Kiwanuka
  - Kingdom of Buganda – [*Obwakabaka bwe Buganda*] (1940-1958) by Haydon, E.S.
  - Report *y'etteeka ly'empisa y'ensi*[12] (1957)
  - Fragmantation of Land in Uganda (1949) by Lawrance, O.B.E.
  - Laws of the Uganda Protectorate (1936) 2nd Edition by Lewey, Arthur, et al.
  - Township Application Rules (1935)
  - The Civil Procedure Ordinance & Rules (1928)

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[11] The World Digital Library (WDL) http://www.wdl.org/en/ is an Internet based information resource that is co-sponsored by the Library of Congress (LC) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The principal objectives of the WDL are to promote international & intercultural understanding; expand the volumes and variety of cultural content on the internet; provide resources to educators, scholars, & general audiences; build capacity in partner institutions to narrow the digital divide within & between countries.

[12] Local dialect translated as the "Report related to the country's land issues."

- Ordinances & Subsidiary Legislation (1949)
- Supplements to the Uganda Gazettes (1949)
- Police (Amendment) Ordinance No. 27 of 1949
- Supplement to the Uganda Gazette Extra-ordinary; Vol. XLII, No. 20, 1949
- The Uganda Employment Ordinance 1946
- Police Powers and the Individual in Uganda (1973) by Nsereko, Daniel
- A Simple Guide to the Law of Divorce in Uganda (1963) by Wangolo, A. L.
- The Entrepreneur Act (1949)

- **KOHA Integrated Library Management System:**
  Koha is an open source Integrated Library System (ILS), used world-wide by public school and special libraries. It is web-based and has all the features that would be expected in an ILS, including:
    - Simple, clear interface for librarians and members (patrons)
    - Union catalog facility
    - Customizable search
    - Circulation and borrower management
    - Full acquisitions system including budgets and pricing information (featuring supplier and currency conversion).
    - Ability to cope with any number of branches, patrons, patron categories, item categories, items, currencies and other data
    - Serials system for magazines or newspapers
    - Reading lists for member.

  The use of this system means that most of the library house-keeping functions are automated. It also means that the profiles of all users/patrons are electronically captured in addition to the detailed description of each and every reading material in the library. Bar code readers are used to check-out and check-in reading materials.

- **Networked Printer and Photocopier:** The Library also provides printing and photocopying services at a minimal fee. This goes a long way in relieving pressure on the library, which continues to have inadequate reading space and insufficient reading materials.

3.5 Library activities/services:

The library is open for most of the year (operating day and night) with the following activities.

3.5.1 Reading, Research and Study

The library facilitates reading, research and study for the following categories of users:

- Post –Graduate Bar Course students,
- Diploma in Law Course students (on day and evening programmes),

The following are however required to either pay for every visit they make to the library or pay annual subscription for whatever services they may need from the library:

- Students from other Institutions, e.g., universities offering law.
- Students on Short Law Courses,
- Lawyers, Advocates, Judges and Civil servants,
- The International Community

3.5.2 Reference Services

The library staff are involved in helping and guiding library clients in accessing the relevant reading and reference materials.

3.5.3 Lending Services

These services are extended to Lecturers and Administrative Staff. Unlike students these users are allowed to take reading materials out of the library for a period not exceeding seven (7) days.

3.5.4 Internet Services

Students and staff can access the Internet from the Computer Laboratory.

3.5.5 Facilitating research and law reporting

The Library facilitates the research and law reporting functions of the institution by providing the timely, relevant legal information to facilitate the production of publications on topical legal issues and digests of court cases as well as law reports.

3.5.5 Photocopying Services

The Library has one heavy-duty networked photocopier which all users can access as long as pay for the service.

3.5.6 Subscription Services

These Services are extended to students from other institutions, practicing lawyers and other members of the legal fraternity who either make annual subscription or pay whenever they visit. The rates are as follows:

- **Per Visit:** Students pay UGX3,000/=; Non-Students pay UGX10,000/=
- **Annual Subscription:** Students pay UGX100,000/=; Non-Students pay UGX150,000/=

3.6 Library Committee

This Committee is composed of representative of the Management and the teaching departments. The Committee convenes three times a year to consider proposals and adopt recommendations in connection to the management and growth of the law library.

3.7 Perennial Problems

Prior to the funding of the recently concluded Capacity Building Project by the Government of the Netherlands, a "Needs Assessment" was conducted whereby problems/challenges facing the library were duly identified and the following statement made:

The library functions, though without a long term vision of its role within the LDC and for other stakeholders (such as the universities) and has no cooperation with other law libraries. The physical plant is small as well, with no significant computer facilities. Usage patterns are a problem, especially given the large number of law faculty students (who pay a fee) using the library three (3) days per week. The collection of reading materials is limited and there is no systematic thinking on how it should be developed further. Library staff have limited background on law librarianship. Soft ware for librarian is not user friendly. The budget does not cover basic needs.[13]

Problems were analyzed under Result Area 5 (Teaching Infrastructure)[14] and recommendations duly given. The LDC library had been overtaken by events. There was inadequate reading and storage space, there were insufficient reading materials, manual systems still prevailed, key staff lacked the necessary exposure and training in law librarianship and there was need for a comprehensive library strategy.

Whereas the donor funding has gone a long way in alleviating the library problems challenges still remain. With now a population of over 900 students including staff and users from outside the institution the ratio of book to user may have fallen from 1 book to 30 students but still remains a problematic 1 to 15! And even in the new larger library premises there is provision for only 230 users. As for the computer laboratory the facility has only 35 computers! And following a recent restructuring the ratio of library staff to users is 1 to about 200 students!

3.8   Long-Term Solutions

Earlier on all these problems had already been highlighted in two proposals[15] where recommendations were duly given essentially suggesting an overhaul of the library. Implementation of these recommendations would, however, await funding from development partners which opportunity came only recently in 2007. This donor funding has actually gone a long way to kick-start the implementation process.

In the short-term more reading materials were bought and the library premises were relocated to a more spacious building that would accommodate more readers and provided more room for the increased stock of reading materials. It should however be noted – and indeed as pointed out in

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[13] STRENGTHENING CAPACITY OF THE LDC TO UNDERTAKE PRACTICAL LEGAL TRAINING (Project Number NPT-UGA-236) – Training & Institutional Needs Assessment Mission Report – pages 19, 28 and 29.

[14] Training & Institutional Needs Assessment Mission Report - pages 27-28.

[15] Proposals by Joseph A. Semugabi – Chief Librarian, LDC. These two papers which included the "**Re-engineering Plan 2005**" and the "**Concept Paper to Establish a Legal Resource Centre 2008**" were adopted by the Library Committee and the Management Committee.

the earlier proposals – these measures could only partially alleviate the problems of inadequate space in terms of stock and reading rooms; and in terms of insufficient reading materials. They were actually what you would call emergency short-term measures.

The long-term solution to these problems was actually in the transformation of the Information Systems. The library had to be comprehensively computerized. It was not feasible to keep increasing physical structures to accommodate the ever-increasing users and stock! There was need for Internet connectivity; an integrated web based library management system; and access to electronic resources.

4.0 Law Librarianship in Uganda

Whereas law libraries have been around for a long time Law librarianship as a distinct 'course unit' does not feature anywhere in curriculums of library and information science schools. The point is that in Uganda a BLIS[16] degree is all that qualifies one to start a career in law librarianship. This however has serious problems when it comes to the actual performance of such graduates in law libraries. A gap in their training quickly becomes evident as effective and efficient service delivery is greatly inhibited.

4.1 Law Libraries

The following constitute key law libraries in Uganda most of which are attached to academic institutions and the various courts. Others are libraries in law firms which are usually very small, difficult to staff and difficult to manage! And again others are more or less legal resource centers that exist to facilitate activities of government agencies like the Ministry of Justice and the Law Reform Commission.

- High Court Library

- Supreme Court Library

- Court of Appeal Library

- Ministry of Justice Library

- Law Reform Commission Library

- Universities (MUK,UCU,IUIU,KIU)

- Key Law Firms

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[16] Bachelor of Library & Information Science currently offered at only two Universities, i.e., Makerere University College of Computing & Information Science – East African School of Library & Information Science; and the Uganda Christian University, Mukono.

- Anti-Corruption Court

- Commercial Court

- LDC Law Library

- Uganda law society Legal Resource Centre

4.2   Qualifications for law librarians

As already pointed out there is no training in law librarianship. The minimum qualification for one to work in a law library is a **Diploma in Library & Information Science or Bachelor of Library & Information Science Degree.** The main public university, i.e., Makerere University, also offers a **Master of Science in Information Science.**

4.3   Challenges in Law Librarianship:

Fundamentally, the main challenge facing law librarians in Uganda is actually the kind of "knowledge" they organize and try to make accessible in the most efficient and effective manner to law students, professionals and scholars. The legal discipline is rather dynamic and unlike other disciplines has several kinds of sources of legal information including texts, legislation, forms & precedents, unreported cases, reviews, law reports, parliamentary Hansards, government policies, constitutions, etc. All these have to be internalized by the law librarian and organized in such a way that facilitates ease of access. Besides, law involves a lot of research. And given the enormous amount of legal information available in both hard copies and electronic format this becomes too much for the user of the law library who would require every assistance from the librarian to undertake research in the most effective and efficient manner. The law librarian should therefore be computer literate and should also be actively involved in imparting research skills to users of such libraries! The point is that librarians working in legal facilities require some kind of continuous training for effective and efficient service delivery.

Also an elementary understanding of law could help a lot. Of course if a lawyer could become a librarian as is the case in the USA the challenges related to complexity of the legal discipline probably would not arise but this is not the case in Uganda. A lawyer cannot imagine working as a librarian. Actually what would be most feasible is to give librarians some basic training in law, i.e., in addition to their BLIS Degree they would add a Diploma in Law offered at the Law Development Centre.

4.3.1 The Need for Training[17]

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[17]Given my long experience working in a law library I have been involved in assisting several librarians who keep finding problems when they take up jobs in law librarians. The need is there esp. when it comes to the following:
- Updating laws
- Citation
- Legal Terminologies

Librarians working in law libraries really require some training which training may not necessarily be formal as such but could be obtained through net working with other libraries, interning in well established law libraries, and participating in activities of the appropriate associations both at the national and international level.

4.4   Problems Facing Law Libraries in Uganda:

At the institutional level characteristic problems facing law libraries in Uganda include:

4.4.1   Financial Constraints

Such libraries are underfunded especially where they operate in institutions and in a country for that matter that operate budgets that are greatly constrained. A big part of budget financing is facilitated by donor funding - in the form of loans, grants and expatriate assistance. In these circumstances such libraries do not even constitute a priority area when it comes to budget allocation.

4.4.2   No Special Training in Law Librarianship

As already pointed out Librarians working in law institutions have the basic degree or qualifications in library and information science. There is however no doubt and given the challenges of legal information management that such librarians require additional specialized training in this field for more efficient and effective service delivery. Of course they even lack exposure to serious libraries in the developed world.

4.4.3   Understaffed

Coupled with the problem of financial constraints these libraries are always understaffed. Currently the LDC library, for example, has only four permanent staff serving a student population of over 800 students. This is a ratio of 1 staff to 200 students!

4.4.4   Under stocked

Again given the financial problems these libraries are greatly under stocked. At the LDC Library the student to book ratio is alarming being 1 book to 30 students!

4.4.5   Lack functional library buildings

These libraries lack spacious, functional library buildings which greatly curtails professional storage of reading materials and equipment and a conducive reading and research environment.

4.4.6   Mostly depend on donor funding

Whereas donor funding assists a lot in alleviating some of these problems the underlying problem remains that whatever is done and achieved following donor funded projects cannot be sustained. There is need to review the way our international development partners extend assistance. Such assistance should lead to self-sustenance not perpetual dependence. In any case it not always forthcoming.

4.4.7   Fragmented

These libraries although they share the same challenges and problems are unfortunately fragmented which does not help their situation at all!

4.4.8   Not so helpful Library Association

The Uganda Association of Libraries lacks the capacity to deal with problems and challenges facing special libraries in fields like medicine and law.

With such challenges and problems facing librarians working in law libraries it was pertinent to form an Association that would specifically and effectively address our needs. Such an Association would help among other things:

- Attract more assistance from government & the international community
- Network and share resources
- Make proposals to government with regard to standards, training, etc

5.0 Future of Law Librarianship

The future of Law librarianship in Uganda lies in a dynamic Association which would assist in facing the challenges and solving the problems as well as promoting the profession in sustainable ways.

5.1 Association of Uganda Law Libraries (AULL)

The Association was actually founded to deal with the aforementioned problems and challenges.

It is hoped that this Association would effectively mobilize law librarians and place them in a bargaining position to influence parent institutions and government to fully support their professional development and come up with such serious strategies and policies geared at the growth of these libraries for more efficient and effective service delivery.

The AULL is a very young Association registered in 2011. As a nationwide, cooperative non-profit organization it seeks to:

- To unite library and Information Professionals, persons and organizations connected with and interested in the promotion of law libraries and the legal information promotion in Uganda.
- Promote and monitor standards with regard to the management and dissemination of legal information.
- Promote professional development and continuing education of law library and information professionals through meetings, lectures, seminars, workshops, conferences and exchange visits.
- Collaborate with organizations and associations of similar interest.
- Promote research and publishing with regard to law librarianship in Uganda and other countries.
- Promote the work of individuals, libraries, and other organizations concerned with the dissemination of legal information;
- Advance the education and training of law librarians;
- Foster networking and mentoring among legal information professionals on a worldwide basis by creating and maintaining ongoing relationships between AULL and other international, national and regional law library and legal information organizations;
- Support and encourage the development of national legal information policies and promote free access to legal information.
- Promote legal information awareness and education to the community.
- Liaise and co-operate with any other individuals or organizations who are willing and able to assist in the realization of these objectives

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the development of law librarianship in Uganda is besieged by several problems. Fundamentally, most of these problems have to do with the fact that we operate in a country within the Third World bracket. Typical of such countries is that they are extremely financially constrained and as if that is not enough they portray poor performance on part of their governments when it comes to upholding human rights and demonstrating sound financial management. And as if that is not bad enough here is also a high level of corruption. They are also debt ridden and cannot operate without budget support from the World Bank and developed countries.[18] Neither are their priorities always right and so you will find that most of the scarce resources are used to prop despot in power and on senseless civil wars.

With such problems at the macro level every institution suffers in terms of financial support and development. LDC is no exception to such state of affairs. As a matter of fact the current developments at the institution including restructuring, trainings and attachments for key staff and of course to some measure the stocking, reorganization and computerization of its law library have been solely financed through a donor funded project[19]. Such is the case in such countries and unless there are donor funds growth in any sector of the society is hard to realize.

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[18] These issues feature a lot in the media like in the Saturday Monitor of June 23, 2012; p.3 where donors were threatening to stop support to the government. This particular paper actually reported: *"The World Bank and UK have announced cuts in their budget support to Uganda citing government's failure to address high-level corruption, human rights violations…."*

[19] In 2007 LDC obtained funding for a four year project from NUFFIC - The Netherlands Programme for the Institutional Strengthening of Post-Secondary Education and Training Capacity (NPT) http://www.nuffic.nl/en .