

## Utilization and Dissemination of Information Resources in District Information and Documentation Centres in Kisumu County, Kenya

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### ABSTRACT

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*Access to government-related information through District Information and Documentation Centres (DIDCs) is essential in monitoring development programs in counties and the nation at large. However, Kenyans remain detached from the government because of low levels of accountability. Low levels of accountability are associated with corruption, mismanagement, and poor service delivery which are likely to slow down development projects in the sub-counties. This study sought to assess utilization and dissemination of information resources in DIDCs in Kisumu County. This study aimed to: determine the level of awareness among users of DIDCs, establish the extent to which users utilize DIDCs, describe the strategies that DIDC staff employ to facilitate user utilization of information resources in DIDCs, and examine the challenges that DIDC staff face in providing information to users. The study was guided by Richard Oliver's Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory. This study employed the descriptive survey design and mixed-methods approach to investigate the research objectives. The study was conducted in four sub-counties of Kisumu County: Kisumu Central, Seme, Muhoroni, and Nyando. The sub-counties were purposely selected because they host DIDCs in densely populated areas in their respective ministries with a target population of 205,935. Using Taro Yarmane's formula, the study used a sample of 400 users and 20 DIDC staff. Random sampling was used to select participants of the study. DIDC User Questionnaires and DIDC Staff Interview Schedule were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data respectively. The data collection instruments were piloted with 10% of the participants. Reliability was determined using the test-retest method. Construct validity of the data collection instruments was ensured by deriving the questionnaire items from evidence presented in literature relevant to this study. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics like frequency tables and percentages. Qualitative data was categorized into themes and sub-themes as they emerged to make meaningful narratives for purposes of triangulating the quantitative results. Findings suggest that a significant number of users lack awareness on the products and services offered by DIDCs. This is associated with reduced visits and utilization of information resources in DIDCs. The study recommends use of workshops and open-days to create awareness about the products and services, and adequate funding for staffing and procurement of current and relevant documents. Librarians, information technologists, and records management personnel, and policy makers may use the findings of this study to improve service delivery for user awareness and utilization, and enhance users' experiences in using government documentation centres for information seeking.*

**Key Words:** *Utilization of Information Resources, Dissemination of Information Resources*

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## 1. Introduction

Freedom of access to information is an essential right in developed and some developing countries (Banisar, 2006). It is a freedom that allows individuals and groups to protect their right. As such, it guards against mismanagement, abuses, and corruption by public officers. To help permit the freedom on information, the United States of America (USA) government was among the first across the globe to develop an initiative aimed at increasing transparency through open access to government data (Banisar, 2006; Jaeger & Bertot, 2010). To achieve this, the U.S. government has information centres meant to foster openness and transparency in government decision-making processes (Jaeger & Bertot, 2010). There are elaborate efforts by the U.S. government to increase access to information and guarantee the freedom to information and foster participation in government decision-making processes (Banisar, 2006; Bwalya, 2009; Jaeger & Bertot, 2010). Jaeger and Bertot (2010) deduce that government information services are of great importance for the good of both citizens and governments. This is due to the various benefits and the roles it plays in administrative, educational, and development issues. To achieve these benefits, governments disseminate information using varied communication processes, media, and techniques to engage different stakeholders, namely citizens, information specialists and policy makers for purposes of realizing social change (Jaeger & Bertot, 2010; Sarrayrih & Sriram, 2015).

Governments that maintain an open government data policy have managed to open access to government data and documentations that could otherwise remain hidden. In this regard, citizens of countries that guarantee freedom on information can use government information made public for any use (Janssen, 2012). The situation is rather different in Africa. In Nigeria, for example, there is evidence of awareness and usage of government information centres among users and its citizens. Information centres are dedicated to rural dwellers to provide accurate information for various development activities (Pokorny et al., 2011). Public information centres across the globe remain largely under-utilized due to unreliable information infrastructure, users' lack of time to visit the centres, and high illiteracy levels among target users (Emasealu & Popoola, 2016; Mtega & Benard, 2013; Wang, 2014). Other challenges include lack of: support, accessibility to resources, availability of information on demand, access to information and communication technologies, and competence of information and records personnel (Basamh, Qudaih, & Suhaimi, 2014; Mutula & Mostert, 2010). Mutula and Mostert (2010) note that staff of government information centres can deal more effectively with members of the public if they have: customer relations skills; access to most, if not all, of the government information; and information dissemination equipment.

In Kenya, there are government documentation centres established to acquire, preserve, and disseminate public and private reports (UNESCO, 2014). The Kenyan government established DIDCs to ensure safe keeping and access to information; a right aimed at helping the public understand government decisions and policies relating to education, health, housing and infrastructure projects, agriculture, and the facts behind such decisions (Namande, 2012; UNESCO, 2014). The government does this on the basis of increasing public engagement and enhancing the levels of governance, accountability, transparency, and rule of law (Kamar, 2006; UNESCO, 2014). However, low accountability for government programmes and services persists, allowing for corruption and poor service delivery (Maumbe & Okello, 2013; Njuguna, Santani,

Bills, Bryant, & Bryant, 2014). Low accountability coupled with restricted access to information is a concern for the Kenyan citizens who wish to access and use information on government programmes and services for tracking (Namande, 2012). This is despite the existence of the Access to Information (ATI) Act effected on September 21, 2016 (Kakah, 2019). The Act gives Kenyan citizens the power to question services and development programmes by public and private entities. A court case by lawyer Apollo Mboya against Kenya Power exposed the frustrations that Kenyan citizens face in tracking what goes on within the government as far as corruption and mismanagement are concerned (Kakah, 2019). This study focused on four DIDCs spread out in four sub-counties of Kisumu County. The DIDCs were established to serve as reference and resource centres providing the public with information on: development statistics for the various districts, national and district plans, research reports, technical reference materials for different sectors (Namande, 2012). However, this excluded classified information. This is a bottleneck to transparency. Access of information on the aforementioned government documents is limited for some reason. To this end, this study sets out to assess user utilization and the dissemination strategies that DIDC staff employ to increase access to government data and records available in the documentation centres.

### **1. Statement of the Problem**

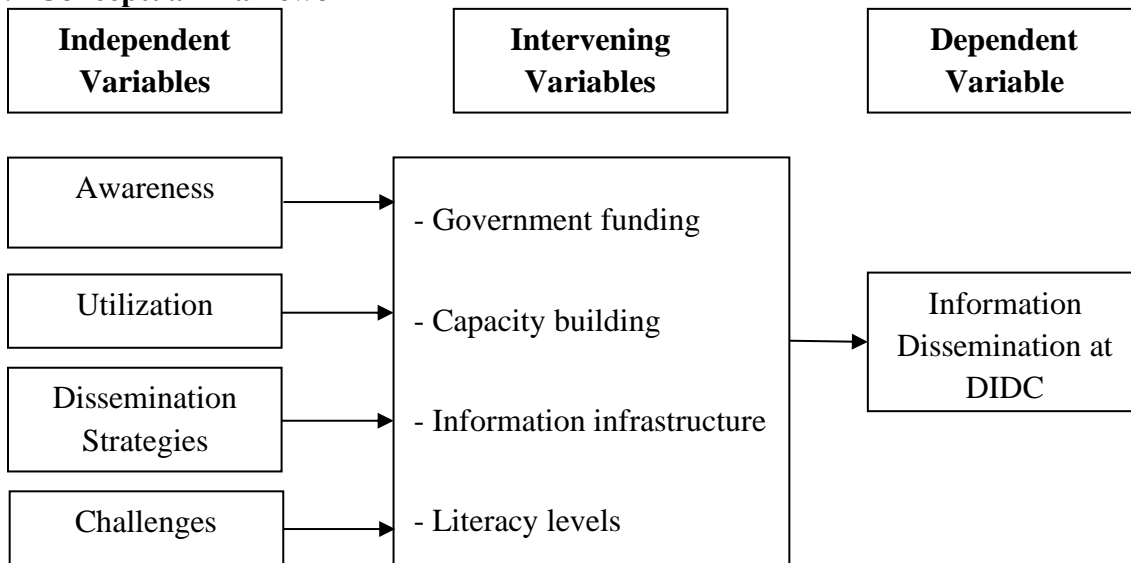
Public information centres are established on the basis of enhancing transparency about government information, research, and operations. They are premised on the engagement of citizens towards the attainment of high levels of democratic literacy and citizenry involvement in the various aspects of governance. Government information centres are aimed at replacing the traditional dependence on inward decision-making originally characterised by the rarity of information with a paradigm of greater opportunities for discursive networking and citizen involvement (Roy, 2020). The government of Kenya established information centres like DIDCs to organize and manage public documentations for purposes of providing government information to citizens through an elaborate infrastructure within the existing cultural and socioeconomic constraints. DIDCs serve as reference and resource centres for information on government programmes for more citizen engagement, public participation in decision-making processes, and accountability and transparency on use of public resources. However, challenges associated with accountability and transparency, increased poverty, inequitable distribution of resources, marginalization, poverty, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and low citizen engagement persist (Nyandiko, 2020). This begs the question, to what extent does the citizenry utilize government information centres to access information for purposes of public engagement? It is against this background that the current study investigated levels of utilization and the various information dissemination strategies that DIDC staff employ to enhance utilization of the documentation centres and ensure the attainment of the objectives upon which the centres were established.

### **2. Objectives of the Study**

This study aimed to:

- i. Determine the level of awareness among users of DIDCs.
- ii. Establish the extent to which users utilize information resources in DIDCs.
- iii. Describe information dissemination strategies applied by DIDC staff to facilitate utilization of information resources.
- iv. Examine the challenges that DIDC staff face in providing information to users.

### 3. Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Source: Author, 2018)**

Raising public awareness of the existence of government information centres is critical in letting target users know the location and information products and services found in a documentation centre. Once the public is aware, they are more likely to make informed choices to visit, access and use the nearby DIDCs in search of information. Once the targeted users visit the DIDCs, the information dissemination and management staff may employ a set of strategies to effectively disseminate information resources in ways that they are easily available upon request for use by users in making informed decisions as they engage in public participation forums. It is the view of this paper that users who visit DIDCs may share their experiences with other members of the public to disconfirm expectancy. However, inadequate government funding and budget allocation for capacity building and information infrastructure, and low literacy levels among users may significantly inhibit the operations of DIDCs and subsequently impact on their effectiveness in disseminating information resources to users. Users reduce the number of visits to DIDCs if their expectations and need for information are not met.

### 4. Literature Review

Freedom to information is a basic right for every person (Banisar, 2006). Being aware of this right allows individuals in a country to protect this right and guard against abuses of office, mismanagement, and corruption. A global survey of public access to information revealed that governments disseminate public records to foster transparency and openness to improve citizens' trust in government decision-making processes and actions (Banisar, 2006; Cuillier & Piotrowski, 2009). A study conducted in Oman revealed that it is not enough to develop and establish government information services (Sarrayih & Sriram, 2015). The study notes that it is imperative for governments to train and motivate citizens on the various government information dissemination techniques. Evidence indicates that only 25.5% of the 55 African countries had endorsed the freedom on information by January, 2015 (Asogwa & Ezema, 2017). Such low levels of guaranteeing freedom of information in the African continent could be responsible for the low shifts in awareness levels. In Nigeria, a survey showed that 65.5% of the citizens have low levels of awareness about government information platforms (Olatokun & Busola, 2012). Lack of

awareness among the general public is a critical factor that influences the willingness to adopt government information services (Sebina & Mazebe II, 2014). In the South African context, citizens were found to have a poor perception of the value of existing government information systems, hence missing the value of existing government information services (Matavire et al., 2010; Sebina & Mazebe II, 2014).

Successful utilization of government information resources requires users to be literate to interpret the available information (Janssen, 2012). This way, the citizens are able to make sense of the government data made available through the government documentation centres. Halonen (2012) argues that if the citizens of a country are illiterate then they might not benefit from open government data and as such might not have full access to the information contained in these data (Halonen, 2012; Janssen, 2012). It becomes evident, therefore, that literacy is a critical success factor in accessing and effectively utilizing government information services. A cross-cultural comparative study of Spain and the USA by Rufín, Bélanger, Molina, Carter, and Figueroa (2018) explored the factors that influence users' intentions to use government information services. The study explored the effects of variables such as perceived ease of use of government information resources, perceived usefulness of government information, trust, and compatibility on intentions to use government information services. Results indicated that perceived ease of use has a significant effect on intention to use for the USA sample. There was no significant effect reported on the two variables for the Spain sample (Rufín et al., 2018).

Current trends suggest that the government seeks to improve information services and public participation in decision-making processes (Henninger, 2017). Part of the improvement involves reducing chances of mismatches between citizens expectations and beliefs, and assumptions of government information providers. According to Henninger (2017), failure to reduce this gap can inhibit the performance of government information services and significantly bar them from fulfilling their objectives. This study looks at the information dissemination strategies that information management personnel employ to meet users' expectations. Literature recommends a raft of measures that the government can take to prepare information professionals for changes in their roles (Bertot & Jaeger, 2016). First, librarians ought to be trained on how best to help users access print and electronic forms of government information. Second, librarians should be trained on searching and retrieving government information in print and electronic forms. Third, librarians should be able to preserve government information in case of inevitable future changes in technology. Fourth, librarians should facilitate successful interaction between users and government information. Finally, librarians should ensure access to and use of a range of government information disseminated at government information centres (Bertot & Jaeger, 2016).

In Egypt, a study by Elkadi (2013) suggests that information, technology, staffing and skills, management and structures, and money and time are success factors in the implementation of government information services. It appears as though skills in using information and communication technologies competently is critical in the evolving roles of information personnel (Brettle & Urquhart, 2011; Li, Pálsdóttir, Trill, Suomi, & Amelina, 2018). It is thus imperative for information specialists to acquire technological core competencies in a rapidly advancing technological age (Li et al., 2018; Varlejs & Walton, 2009). Therefore, to meet the needs of the contemporary information society, government information centres need to invest in technological tools and furnish information professionals with adequate ICT knowledge and skills.

Operating an open government data policy has given the public access to information that could otherwise remain hidden (Janssen, 2012). Nonetheless, the open government data system offers

little support for critical aspects of information accessibility like intellectual accessibility. Consequently, some open government data systems strongly lean towards the financial, physical, and technical availability of data. This can significantly reduce the accessibility and utilization of government information (Janssen, 2012).

Sarrayrih and Sriram (2015) conducted a study in which findings indicated that cities' lack of planning and management can also pose a major challenge to access and utilization of government information services. Sarrayrih and Sriram (2015) further found that the complexity and advancement of technology might create uncertainty in some developing nations. To mitigate this challenge, Sarrayrih and Sriram (2015) recommends training the public about ICT as a medium of delivering and formatting government information. In Nigeria, Asogwa and Ezema (2017) employed the use of document analysis and revealed a myriad of challenges. The challenges include: colonial legacy, inexperienced information professionals charged with the responsibility of implementing the freedom of information Acts, poor leadership, corruption, as well as hydra-headed clauses like concealment of government records for reasons of national security (Asogwa & Ezema, 2017). Coupled with other privacy rights, hydra-headed clauses serve to impede open access to government records in the African continent.

Kenya is not a stranger to the challenges identified in other territories. A study by Wawire and Messah (2010) identified a number of challenges inhibiting the effectiveness of university libraries in the country. First, financial constraints infringe on the operations of university libraries. Second, continuous inflation in the cost of information resources. This is particularly costly in an ICT age where modern technological equipment is required to ensure seamless dissemination, retrieval, and storage of information. Third, the study reported that information staff without the relevant skills man the libraries which says a lot about the quality of service delivery and operation of the libraries. Finally, lack of institutional support and staff shortage make it difficult for documentation centres and libraries to deliver on their mandate and meet users' expectations (Bryson, 2017; Wawire & Messah, 2010). The government of Kenya established DIDCs to help improve access to information and espouse good governance, transparency and accountability through an elaborate stakeholder engagement process where Kenyan citizens are actively involved in the decision-making processes of the government. However, low accountability and transparency, corruption, increased poverty, marginalization, inequitable distribution of public resources, and low citizen participation persist in Kenya. Through review of past studies, the current study found a rarity of studies on citizenry's use of government information centres to access information for purposes of public engagement. In addition, there is limited research examining the information dissemination strategies employed by information professionals to improve the experience of government information centre users. Finally, there is a rarity of research on the challenges that DIDC staff face in providing information to users.

## **5. Research Methodology**

This study used the descriptive design as it enables the researcher to solicit information from the respondents. Additionally, descriptive survey design is an efficient means of collecting large amounts of data within the shortest time possible (Creswell, 2014; Gravetter & Forzano, 2015). The independent variables of this study were: user awareness, utilization, and dissemination strategies employed by DIDC staff to support utilization. User utilization of information resources at DIDCs was the dependent variable. Intervening variables included: government funding, capacity building, infrastructure, and literacy levels.

The study was conducted in DIDCs located in four sub-counties within Kisumu County: Kisumu Central, Muhoroni, Seme, and Nyando. The sub-counties boast of large numbers of target users. This warranted the need to determine whether targeted users in the four sub-counties accessed and utilized government documents in DIDCs. The study focused on two key populations: DIDC staff and users (civil servants). This study targeted 20 DIDC staff and 205,935 targeted users. Table 3.4.1 below provides the population profile.

The researcher selected all the 20 DIDC staff through census sampling. The study applied Taro Yamane's formula to determine the sample size for DIDC users who visited the centres. The sample size of users was determined at 95% confidence level and established as 400. In addition to the users, all the 20 staff members who work at the DIDCs in Kisumu County were selected for interviews. Therefore, a total of 400 respondents were selected to participate in the study. A total of 283 respondents filled and returned the Users' Questionnaire. This translated to 70.75% response rate. Only 12 DIDC staff were interviewed out of a possible 20 that were initially sampled; giving a response rate of 60%. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used as the primary data collection instruments. The researcher administered DIDC User questionnaires with rated statements to all the selected 400 DIDC users. The questionnaire contained one open-ended questionnaire on the challenges that users face while using the DIDCs. In addition, the researcher conducted staff interviews for the 20 information professionals working in their respective work stations across the four sub-counties. Qualitative data obtained from the interviews was used to verify the quantitative responses collected through the questionnaires. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0 was used to analyse quantitative data. Quantitative data from the questionnaires was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency tables and percentages. Analysis was carried out per objective to ensure that each research question is adequately addressed and the objectives of the study met. Qualitative data collected from the open-ended question in the DIDC User Questionnaire and the Staff Interview Schedule were categorized into themes and sub-themes as they emerged to make meaningful narratives that addressed the fourth objective of the study. Quantitative data was analysed first and the qualitative data presented after the descriptive statistics.

## 6. Data Analysis

### 7.1 Knowledge of Existence of DIDCs

Awareness of existence of government information centres is critical in accessing and adopting government information services (Mtega & Benard, 2013; Sebina & Mazebe II, 2014). Table 1 below presents a summary of these findings.

*Table 1: Knowledge of Existence of DIDCs*

	Frequency	Percent
Valid	1	.4
Friend/Colleague	186	65.7
Internet	32	11.3
Newspaper	24	8.5
Other (unspecified)	26	9.2
Radio	7	2.5
Television	7	2.5
Total	283	100.0

A total of 186 respondents indicated that they got to know about DIDCs through a friend or colleague. This number accounted for 65.7% of the total respondents selected for this study. Another 11.3% of the respondents reported that they learned of DIDCs through the Internet. Newspapers made 8.5% of the respondents aware of DIDCs while radio and television stations each contributed to 2.5% of the level of awareness about the existence of DIDCs in the study area. The remaining 9.2% of the respondents became aware of DIDCs through other sources. Whereas sentiment words influence user awareness (Qazi et al., 2017), its reach is limited. If the reach is limited, then access by targeted users is reduced (Dwivedi, Sahu, Rana, Singh, & Chandwani, 2016). Subsequently, such low access levels are likely to reduce utilization of the government information centres.

Familiarity with information products and services in an information centre increases users' chances of utilizing information resources (Mtega & Benard, 2013; Sebina & Mazebe II, 2014). Corresponding frequency counts are summarised in Table 2 below.

*Table 2: Familiarity with DIDC Products and Services*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Extremely familiar	9	3.2
	Moderately familiar	97	34.3
	Not at all familiar	40	14.1
	Slightly familiar	98	34.6
	Very familiar	39	13.8
	Total	283	100.0

Findings of this study indicate that 3.2% of the participants are extremely familiar with the information centres' products and services; 13.8% are very familiar; 34.3% are moderately familiar; 34.6% are slightly familiar; and 14.1% are not at all familiar with the products and services offered by DIDC centres in Kisumu County. Whereas majority of the respondents indicated that they were familiar with DIDC products and services, findings of this study also suggest that a substantial number (48.7%) are not familiar with DIDC products and services. Lack of sufficient familiarity with information products limits a user's capacity to access and use documentations (Nzivo, 2012). Users rarely seek information or services that they have little or no knowledge of. This may subsequently lead to underutilization of information resources in DIDC in Kisumu County.

## 7.2 Utilization of DIDC

This sub-section of the chapter reports findings on utilization of DIDCs in the study area with respect to: users' level of education, frequency of visit, intention to use DIDCs, support to use information resources, frequency of use, organization of DIDC resources, orientation of new users, ease of use, perceived information value, easy to understand, paper-based resources, digital-based resources, and use of local language. Level of education is associated with users' information seeking behaviour (Jacobs, Amuta, & Jeon, 2017; Tennant et al., 2015). Information seeking behaviour is a critical component of utilization of information resources. Table 2 below presents a summary of the descriptive statistics based on respondents' level of education.



*Table 2: DIDC Users' Level of Education*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	College	110	38.9
	Secondary	25	8.8
	University	148	52.3
	Total	283	100.0

Majority of the respondents had university education (52.3%). Another 38.9% of the respondents had attained college education with the remaining 8.8% of the respondents having achieved secondary school education. These results suggest that DIDC users have a minimum secondary school level of education. This in turn indicates that users of DIDCs have gone to school hence are able to read and write. The findings of this study support results obtained by Tennant et al. (2015) which indicated that graduates and post-graduates are more likely to seek and use information than non-high school graduates. Users' level of education is critical in providing information resources that meet their needs (Ghweeba et al., 2017).

Frequency of visit to information centres is associated with information seeking behaviour which is also associated with use of information (Jacobs et al., 2017; Johnson, 2010). For this reason, it is a factor in utilization of government information centres. This study asked respondents to indicate their frequency of visit to the nearest DIDC centres in Kisumu County. Table 3 below provides a summary of these findings.

*Table 3: Frequency of Visit to DIDCs*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Always	25	8.8
	Never	50	17.7
	Often	34	12.0
	Rarely	90	31.8
	Sometimes	84	29.7
	Total	283	100.0

The frequency with which users visit the DIDCs is 29.7%, 12.0% and 8.8% for sometimes, often, and always respectively. A substantial 31.8% of the respondents rarely use the centres while another 17.7% have never used the DIDCs. A significant 49.5% of the respondents reported very low frequency of visits to DIDCs. Low frequency of user visits translates to reduced use of information resources and subsequent underutilization of the information centres (Jacobs et al., 2017).

Intentions to use government information centres is associated with perceived ease of use and utilization of information centres (Rufin et al., 2018). A summary is provided in Table 4 below.

*Table 4: Intention to Use DIDCs*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid		2	.7
	Always	39	13.8
	Never	17	6.0
	Often	56	19.8
	Rarely	70	24.7
	Sometimes	99	35.0
	Total	283	100.0

Analysis of the data suggests that majority of the respondents had intentions to use the nearest DIDCs. Out of a possible 283 respondents, 13.8% reported that they always had intentions to use the centres, 19.8% often had intentions to use the centres, 35.0% sometimes had the intention to use the centres, 24.7% reported that they rarely had intentions to use the centres, and 6.0% of the respondents never had intentions to use the centres. Results presented above suggest that majority (68.4%) of the participants had intentions to use the DIDCs at some point. It is the position of this study that the high intentions to use the government information centres may be associated with effective utilization of information resources in the centres (Rufin et al., 2018). However, this finding contradicts the earlier determination that users had low frequency of visits to the nearest DIDC centres in their sub-counties of residence.

Daniel et al. (2011) note that the provision of support to users in accessing information resources and services is imperative for effective use of information resource centres. Table 4.3.4 below presents a summary of the results.

*Table 5: Support to Use Information Resources*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Always	33	11.7
	Never	35	12.4
	Often	30	10.6
	Rarely	74	26.1
	Sometimes	111	39.2
	Total	283	100.0

This study found that a significant number of the respondents (39.2%) sometimes sought help from the DIDC staff on how to use information resources. Another 26.1% of the respondents indicated that they rarely needed assistance from the DIDC staff. A mere 11.7% of the respondents always sought assistance from the DIDC staff, 10.6% often needed assistance, while another 12.4% of the respondents indicated that they never needed any kind of assistance on how to use the information resources in the DIDCs. It is important to note that the results presented above suggest that majority of DIDC users rely on DIDC staff to support them on how to use information resources.

According to Pocewicz, Nielsen-Pincus, Brown, and Schnitzer (2012), preference for paper-based resources has an association with participants' age, level of education, and length of stay in a region. Older users are likely to prefer paper-based to digital-based information resources. The results in Table 5 below suggest that the use of paper-based resources to deliver information was still preferred.

*Table 6: Preference for Paper-based Information Resources*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Agree	97	34.3
	Disagree	73	25.8
	Strongly Agree	40	14.1
	Strongly Disagree	19	6.7
	Undecided	54	19.1
	Total	283	100.0

As to whether respondents preferred to receive information in paper-based format, 34.3% agreed, 14.1% strongly agreed, 19.1% were undecided, 25.8% disagreed, and 6.7% strongly disagreed. Approximately fifty percent of the participants did not prefer to receive information in paper-based formats. The current study argues that this paradigm shift may be due to advancements in technology and concerns surrounding environmental conservation. Older users of government information centres are more likely to prefer paper-based information resources to alternative formats (Pocewicz et al., 2012).

Delivery of content in local language enhances understanding of information (Bwalya, 2009). This is particularly essential in cases where the targeted users have little or no mastery of the English language. Table 7 below presents a summary of these results.

*Table 7: Delivery of Government Information in Local Languages*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Agree	66	23.3
	Disagree	92	32.5
	Strongly Agree	67	23.7
	Strongly Disagree	29	10.2
	Undecided	29	10.2
	Total	283	100.0

There were mixed reactions as to whether government information documents should be written in local languages. Only 23.3% of the respondents agreed that government information should be provided in local language, 23.7% strongly agreed, 10.2% were undecided, 32.5% disagreed, and 10.2% strongly disagreed with the statement that government information should be written in local language. Contrary to arguments presented in a previous study by Bwalya (2009) which supported the provision of government information in local languages, the findings of the current study suggest that participants are divided on whether content of government information ought to be written in local languages. Respondent One was of the view that recommendations to provide information in local languages should be well-thought out and focused on the audience's literacy.

### 7.3 Information Dissemination Strategies

This sub-section of the chapter presents findings on respondents' perceptions of information dissemination strategies that they thought are important in achieving effective delivery of government information resources in DIDCs. Information dissemination strategies was measured as competencies to apply: traditional reference skills, communication skills, customer service skills, user support, technological support, and information and communications skills to effectively disseminate information.

There is a consensus that traditional reference skills are critical in the formation of the basis for searching and finding reference materials in a library or resource centre (Anderson, 2012; Dollah, 2012; Plumb, 2004). A summary of these results is presented in Table 8 below.

*Table 8: Traditional Reference Skills*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Not at all Important	11	3.9
	Slightly Important	32	11.3
	Fairly Important	44	15.5
	Important	73	25.8
	Very Important	123	43.5
	Total	283	100.0

The highest proportion (43.5%) of the respondents thought that traditional reference skills were very important in the dissemination of information, 25.8% thought traditional reference skills were important, 15.5% thought the skills were fairly important, 11.3% thought the skills were slightly important, and only 3.9% of the respondents perceived traditional reference skills as not at all important. The findings of the current study suggest that traditional reference skills are important in searching, retrieving, disseminating and utilizing government documents at DIDCs in Kisumu County. Furthermore, this finding indicates that majority of the respondents consider traditional reference skills as a critical element in DIDC staff dissemination of information and utilization of government documents.

Majority of the respondents perceived communication skills as critical in the dissemination of government information: 74.6% perceived communication skills as very important, 17.0% thought communication skills was fairly important, 7.4% thought it was important, and only 1.1% thought it was slightly important. A cumulative percentage of 82.0% of the respondents perceived communication skills as either being very important or important. The findings imply that effective communication is imperative in the provision of quality services in DIDCs with an aim to address users' enquiries and use of documents. Majority of the respondents (66.1%) perceived customer service skills as a very important skill to have in the dissemination of government information, 19.1% of the respondents thought this skill was fairly important, 12.0% thought it was important for DIDC staff to have customer service skills, and only 2.8% of the respondents thought customer service skills were slightly important. The findings indicate that customer service skills are perceived as an important skill to have for librarians and information specialists as it helps users to develop perceived value for information resources and increase their intention to use government information centres (Salomonson et al., 2012).

Provision of user support by DIDC staff was perceived as very important by 63.6%, important by 16.3%, fairly important by 15.2%, slightly important by 3.5%, and not at all important by 1.1% of the respondents. Findings indicate that respondents in Kisumu County perceived the need to provide user support as an important skill for librarians. The current study suggests that provision of user support is cardinal in influencing users' sustained intention to use government information centres (Liang et al., 2011). Technological support was perceived as very important by 72.1% of the respondents, 13.1% of the respondents thought technological support was important, 11.3% of the respondents thought technological support was fairly important, and only 3.5% of the respondents perceived the provision of technological support as slightly important in the dissemination of government information. Results from the current study suggest that these emerging trends are important library support systems that information dissemination staff need to help users to access and utilise DIDCs in Kisumu County.

Respondents considered skills in ICT as a very important (80.9%) strategy of dissemination of government information in DIDCs, 7.8% rated skills in ICT as fairly important, 7.4% of the respondents perceived skills in ICT as important, 2.5% perceived it as slightly important, and 1.4% thought skills in ICT were not at all important. Findings of the current study suggest that ICT skills are important in quality service delivery to help DIDC users realize their need to utilize information resources in the DIDC centres in Kisumu County.

#### **7.4 Challenges DIDC Staff Face in Serving Users**

This sub-section presents findings obtained from theming the qualitative data from interviews conducted for DIDC staff. Findings are presented based on the themes and sub-themes that emerged. Shortage of information resources in DIDCs is considered one of the major reasons why the centres have not adequately addressed the needs of the public. The findings indicate that a lot of documents are generated by both the national and county governments but are rarely availed to DIDCs for dissemination to the public. Subsequently, this finding suggests that inadequate information resources in DIDCs has lowered users' expectations, and affected visits to and utilization of the centres in Kisumu County. Respondents argued that the devolution of DIDCs from the national government to the county governments has negatively affected the operations of the centres. After devolution, the DIDCs lost their identity and this masked their primary purpose of dissemination government information on a myriad of issues. Additionally, the reassignment of employees from DIDCs following devolution led to inadequate funds allocation and understaffing.

The redeployment of DIDC officers from the national to county governments has not only starved the centres of employees but also reduced on their efficiency to deliver information resources to users. This may potentially reduce users' utilization of information resources. Findings suggest that devolution has had a role to play in the appreciation of the value of DIDCs and the subsequent need for funding. Respondents also identified understaffing as another challenge facing DIDCs in Kisumu County. Inadequate number of DIDC staff is associated with increased work load which means that employees handle more work than they ought to handle. Moreover, findings suggest that the inadequacy of professional staff has left DIDCs under the control of unsupervised clerical officers leading to disorganization in disseminating information and addressing users' needs. Library leadership is an essential component in driving the vision of library services (Henricks & Henricks-Lepp, 2014). However, there are times when there is a vacuum in libraries and the junior officers are left in charge.

According to Mullins and Linehan (2006), the most essential qualities of library leadership focus on the formulation and implementation of desired goals and vision. The current study has established that lack of leadership in DIDCs in Kisumu County may lead to a lack of vision and this may hamper the delivery of satisfactory service to users and negatively impact utilization of government documents in the centres. Evidence obtained from the interviews revealed that there is a low demand for government information in DIDCs. This follows claims that there is low readership and use of government information centres among residents of Kisumu County. The findings imply that poor reading culture has a significant role to play in users' demand for information. It is the position of this paper that this reduces the frequency of visits users make to DIDCs in their search for government information. A study conducted by Kamalova and Koletvinova (2016) indicates that the quality of utilization of information resources is dependent on users' reading culture, interest in reading, and information culture.

## 7. Conclusion

Users' lack of awareness on the products and services provided by DIDCs in Kisumu County has a direct impact on utilization of information resources available in the centres since they lack knowledge of the type of documents and services offered by these government centres. Consequently, this explains the low frequency visits to DIDCs in Kisumu County. Low visits in turn shows that users are less likely to see documents in the centres as having any value for their professional and academic use. This then leads to underutilization of information resources in DIDCs. Effective utilization is further inhibited by the fact that DIDCs mainly provide users with paper-based documents at a time when the world has embraced digital-based information resources accessible through mobile phones and personal computers. Providing documents in less preferred paper-based formats is associated with users' reduced intention to visit and use the centres in Kisumu County. Key aspects of information dissemination that DIDC staff need include: strong traditional reference skills, communication skills in listening and responding to user enquiries, customer service skills and user support in influencing users' intention to use the centres and ensure continued use over time, and skills in ICT and technological support are cardinal in addressing the needs of a dynamic populace which uses ICT devices to access and utilize the information resources before they are even availed in the centres.

Finally, shortage of information resources has the potential to curtail users' frequency of visits given that they are less likely to find the reading materials they seek. Allocation of adequate funds in the budget to recruit qualified information professionals and procure relevant information resources remains a challenge for DIDCs in Kisumu County. The facilities are understaffed and left without proper leadership structures. Lack of leadership means that clerical officers work unsupervised and without a sense of direction on the procedures of procurement of information resources from national and county governments. Shortage of documents is associated with a reduction in user visits and utilization of DIDCs in Kisumu County.

## 8. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the current study on the awareness, utilization and challenges that DIDC staff face in disseminating information, the study recommends the following:

- i. Create awareness by organizing workshops and open days to showcase the products and services of DIDCs to the public. Additionally, marketing can be done through mainstream media outlets like televisions and radios, and social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.
- ii. Complement the delivery of paper-based information resources with digital-based information resources to match the current trends in technology use for accessing and using information through mobile devices and personal computers for expanded reach and use.
- iii. Develop capacity building programmes for DIDC staff to hone their skills in: handling user enquiries, effective communication, using technology to retrieve reference materials, and digitalization of paper-based information resources.
- iv. Allocate adequate funds to facilitate the operations of the centres, procure relevant and more current reading materials, and recruit qualified staff.
- v. Situate DIDCs in departments that monitor and provide leadership in the attainment of their core mandate of keeping the public informed.

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