The role of public libraries in promoting digital literacy for community empowerment in western Uganda

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ABSTRACT

Digital literacy has become a concern in this era that is characterized by heavy dependence on the usage of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). To evidence this, in Uganda, 36% of the non-internet users are digitally illiterate, and the digital literacy index is still low at 20%. The aim of this study was to investigate the role of public libraries in promoting digital literacy for community empowerment in the western part of Uganda. The study was guided by the specific objectives which include; establishing the strategies undertaken by public libraries; and the challenges they encounter in promoting digital literacy for community empowerment in western Uganda. A case study design was used to gather qualitative data on the availability of library facilities, the strategies undertaken by public libraries; and assessing the challenges encountered by public libraries in promoting digital literacy for community empowerment in western Uganda. The study found out that public Libraries in Uganda are in the front line of promoting digital literacy within their communities through community outreach, face to face, and hands on training. Through these, members within the community are taught mobile phone literacy, computer skills and other life and vocation skills in liquid soap, and shoes making. These libraries also provide information and internet access in a bid to close the access gap. However, they encounter a number of challenges such as limited funding, unstable power supply, few ICT facilities, and few staff within the libraries. There is therefore a need for the government of Uganda to increase funding, recruit more staff, develop a national digital skills framework, mandate internet service providers to support public libraries with free internet access if a digital literate society is to be realised.

Keywords: Public libraries, Digital literacy, Information Communication and Technology

Introduction

Digital literacy has become a concern in this era that is characterised by heavy dependence on the usage of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) (AbdulKareem *et al.*, 2020). For the citizens to remain at the edge of economic development, participate in the global economy, and gain access to education, employment, entrepreneurship, online markets, and e-government services, there is a need for them to acquire digital literacy skills for empowerment and subsequent development (Churchill, 2020; Tejedor *et al.*, 2020).

Developing, enhancing, and sustaining digital literacy skills is a lifelong and community-wide endeavor that requires strong commitment from government, non-governmental organisations, and libraries. For instance, in a bid to fulfill Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.4.1 on "Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills," The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) broadband commission for sustainable development set targets that by 2025, 60% of the youth and adults should have achieved at least a minimum level of proficiency in sustainable digital skills (Garrity, 2020). Despite various initiatives to promote digital literacy in various countries, literature reports a lack of basic digital literacy skills among citizens (Sharma et al., 2016). According to the world development indicators (WDI), most countries are scoring below the digital index. A case to note is the European economy, where less than half of the population have basic literacy skills, while 12 million adults in the U.K. do not have digital skills (Martzoukou and Elliott, 2016).

According to the Economic Forum report 2020, although only 44% of the population has standard digital skills in higher-income economies, only 32% of the population in lower-income countries has basic digital skills (Martzoukou and Elliott, 2016). In Uganda, for example, 36% of the non-internet users are digitally illiterate (Ojok, 2021), and the digital literacy index is still low at 20% (Gillwald and Mothobi, 2019). This scenario is further creating a digital divide between developed and developing countries, urban and rural communities, the rich and the poor in relation to online engagement, information access, education, employment, and business (Gillwald and Mothobi, 2019).

Thus, there was a need to investigate the role of public libraries in promoting digital literacy for community empowerment in the western part of Uganda. The study was guided by the specific objectives namely; establishing the strategies undertaken by public libraries; and assessing the challenges they encountered in promoting digital literacy for community empowerment in western Uganda.

Literature Review

Continuous advancements in information and communication technologies (ICTs) have given birth to a digital era that requires men and women to acquire digital skills. These skills are needed to effectively make use of ICTs for empowerment and subsequent development (Shariman, Razak and Noor, 2012). Although there are no agreed-upon definitions of digital literacy according to Sinha and Ugwulebo (2022), digital literacy is a group of life skills that are essential to possess for full inclusion and participation in a digital media-driven, information-rich society. However vague this definition is purported to be, it is deemed the best on account that it at least encompasses someone's ability to possess technical knowledge for performance and use of information resources (Jose, 2016). This is due to the fact that a nation is posited to have digitally literate citizens when the majority of the populations are able to: [1] use diverse technologies appropriately and effectively to search for and retrieve information; [2] evaluate, interpret, and understand digital media information in relation to the quality of the information retrieved; [3] create and generate new information from various sources; [4] communicate digital information in a variety of formats; [5] use technologies to collaborate with peers, colleagues, family, and the general public; [6] understand the relationships between technologies for lifelong learning, personal privacy, and appropriate information stewardship; [7] actively participate in society by contributing to a vibrant, informed, and engaged community (American Library Association, 2013; Sinha and Ugwulebo, 2022).

According to the modified model of digital literacy fronted by Eshet (2004) and modified by Eshet (2012), digital literacy should look at six [6] skills, Photo-visula skills for understanding messages from graphic displays; reprographics skills for utilising digital reproduction to create new meaningful materials from existing ones; branching, for constructing knowledge from linear, hypertextual navigation; information skills for critically evaluating the quality and validity of information; social-emotional skills for understanding the rules that prevail in the cyberspace and applying it to process large volumes of stimuli at the same time; and Real time thinking skills. This model looks at mainly technical and social skills. Other authors propose digital literacy to be a combination of cognitive knowledge, technical skills and understanding information tasks digitally in a digital environment (Pegrum, 2019). Accordingly, digital literacy should look beyond the development of functional IT skills, to describe a richer set of digital behavior, practices and identities involving critical thinking, reflection, communication, collaboration, social engagement and lifelong learning (McLoughlin, 2011). To be able to measure digital literacy skills among the community, UNESCO guide to education indicators for SDG 4, suggests 9 digital skills: 1. Copying or moving a file or folder, 2. Finding, downloading, installing and configuring software. 3. Using copy and paste tools to duplicate or move information within a document. 4. Creating electronic presentations with presentation software (including text, images, sound, video or charts). 5. Sending e-mails with attached files (e.g. document, picture, video). 6. Transferring files between a computer and other devices. 7. Using basic arithmetic formulae in a spreadsheet. 8. Connecting and installing new devices (e.g. Modem, camera, printer). 9.Writing a computer program using a specialized programming language (Low, 2018).

For digital literacy to be realised within communities and countries, there are other facilitators such as internet connectivity, traditional literacy skills of basic reading and writing, ownership of access devices, electricity, access to up-to-date digital instruction, and a commitment to lifelong learning (IFLA, 2020; American Library Association, 2013). This requires many stakeholders to come on board, such as the government, non-governmental organisations, the private sector, the local community, and the public to support community empowerment through digital literacy (Abiddin, 2022). Key among the arms of government besides the education sector are public libraries that are instrumental in promoting digital literacy among communities. Main strategies taken by public libraries in promoting digital literacy in the current information era are supporting the masses to access information for participation in cultural, civic, and economic domains (McShane, 2011; Martzoukou and Elliott, 2016). They also continue to commit resources to promoting digital literacy among all members of their community, building familiarity with basic digital tools such as office productivity software, image manipulation software, cloud-based apps, and digital content in order to bridge the digital divide (Low, 2018). Furthermore, public libraries are filling the gaps for the population who lack access to technologies or the internet at home or need assistance in using them by offering resources, technology, and services to people of all ages across the country (Pegrum, 2019).

For instance, in America, 17,000 public libraries are on the front lines of digital literacy as part of nationwide promotional efforts to enable people thrive in a digital age (American Library Association, 2013). They provide access to technology and resources, support digital literacy training through formal classes, support skill building, and they also give opportunities to the masses to practice these skills within the libraries (American Library Association, 2013). Thus, it has been reported in the literature that 99% of the public libraries in America offer public internet access, and more than 90% provide digital library

services. Similar to the United Kingdom, as a national strategy, every public library service is expected to include free internet access, online information, and trained staff for enhanced digital literacy (England, 2012). As a result, 99.3% of public libraries in the U.K. have WiFi and public access to computers. In Korea, public libraries offer access to computers, internet, and ICT training to the community as a way of promoting digital literacy (Noh, 2019). While public libraries in African countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya provide training, free access to computers, internet access, online learning opportunities, assisting users in finding online information, applying for university courses, and looking for jobs (Tarus, Gichoya and Muumbo, 2015; KG, 2022; Adedokun and Zulu, 2022; Eze Jacintha, no date).

In Uganda, besides the government efforts to improve ICT skills, digital literacy, and knowledge, 25 public and community libraries, through a partnership with Electronic Information for Libraries [eIFL], are in the drive to promote digital literacy among the youth and women through connection to free online learning opportunities, organising camps where people learn digital skills, and use of mobile phones for finding information and services (Lipeikaite et al., 2022). However, most public libraries face challenges such as inadequate funding, unfavourable government policies, few professional staff, unstable power supply, few ICT facilities, and a lackluster attitude towards the value of digital literacy (Eze Jacintha, 2013; Ahmed and Sargent, 2021; Adedokun and Zulu, 2022).

Figure 1: Conceptual framework.
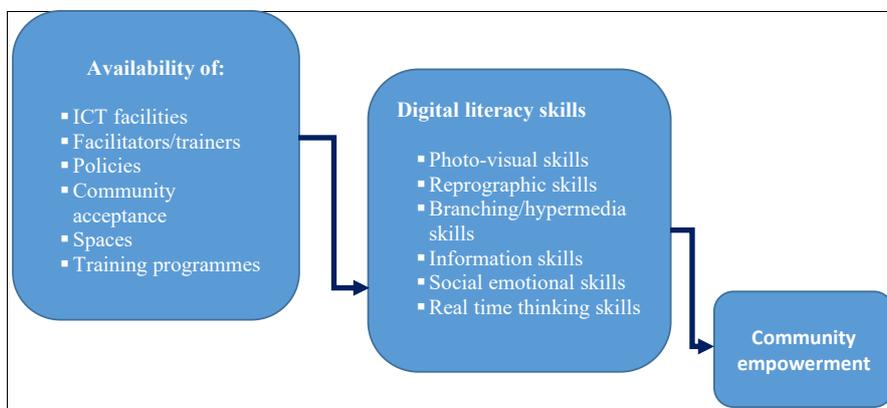
Source: Author, 2023

Data and Methods

This study on the role of public libraries in promoting digital literacy for community empowerment was carried out in public libraries in western Uganda. A case study design was used to gather qualitative data to answer the following questions, what strategies have public libraries undertaken to promote digital literacy for community empowerment. And what are the challenges encountered in promoting digital literacy for community empowerment.

Four public libraries in western Uganda were purposely selected from six (6) public libraries in western Uganda that are among the 26 public libraries selected by National library of Uganda to participate in digital literacy project by eIFL. The selected libraries were Bundbigyo Public Library, Hoima Public Library, Mbarara public Library and Kabale Public Library. However, only three libraries participated

in the study indicated as Public Library 1, 2, and 3. These public libraries were selected on account that they were a better representation of the public libraries in different parts of western Uganda.

Primary data was specifically collected from library staff using both face to face and telephone interviews. This method was deemed the best for collecting qualitative data from few participants who were the staff responsible for carrying out digital literacy programme. Observation checklists were also used to establish the availability of ICT facilities. Secondary data was obtained from reports, websites, and policy documents. Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data. It involved developing themes, assigning codes to the themes, and classifying responses, and interpreting the results.

Results

Number of staff in the Libraries
PL1 had only one staff, PL 2 and 3 had 3 staff members. And out of the three-library staff interviewed, two were female and one was male.

Availability of ICTs and other facilities
All the three libraries had computers. PL1 had 15 computers, although only 9 were working at the time of visit. PL2 had 23 computers all functioning and PL3 had 32 computers. Out of these three libraries, PL1 had no computer laboratory but space was created within the library where the computers were placed. And during the time of training, the library would be out of bounds for those who would want to use the library for study purposes. The other two libraries had separate rooms that were used for training which does not affect other activities of the library. Only one library had a generator, although the issue of fuel to run it remains a great challenge. None of the libraries had a projector. One library borrows from a neighboring institution when there is a need.

Internet availability
All the three Public libraries were connected to the internet with Airtel as the main internet provider. However, two libraries [1 and 2] had a three-year running contract with Airtel Uganda for free internet services. Although the contract for PL2 was nearing expiry. The participant from PL2 had this to say;
…"The contact with Airtel is about to expire either this year or next year and we are not sure whether the council will be in position to pay for internet services" …

PL3 had paid up subscriptions for internet from Airtel Uganda as reported the staff from PL3. however, according to this participant, internet was paid for by National Library of Uganda.

Training capacity
PL3 that has a capacity to train 65 trainees usually has two phases a day, first phase from 9:00-11:00am and 11:00-1:00 daily except Wednesday that is used for office work. PL2 trains 40 on average daily for a month in two sessions first session starts at 9:00 am-1:00pm and the second session runs from 2:00-5:00pm. PL1 has a capacity to train only two times for a week with a repetition session for slow learners.

Strategies for promoting digital literacy
As a measure to close the digital literacy gap and empower the communities, public libraries in Western

Uganda have set up strategies in carrying out digital literacy through:

> Face to face training sessions within the library,
> Reaching out to the community, to saloons, schools, churches, etc.
> Creating awareness within the community about the availability of digital literacy in the library
> Offering free internet services to those who cannot afford but can visit the library premises.
> Offering certificates to those who complete the training sessions.
> Partnering with other bodies in promotion of digital literacy.

Digital skills imparted

Concerning the type of digital skills imparted to the community, these were some of their responses: Basic introduction to computer especially those who had never used computers. This was reported by staff in PL1.

Training in Microsoft packages especially word, and excel, publisher for designing certificates and cards, internet for communication [email, and how to attach documents]. This was reported by all the staff in the three libraries. The programme for PL2 had more modules like online marketing, and website designing, etc. As reported by Staff from PL2.

All the staff affirmed to empowering the community through hands on training on how to make liquid soap, shoes, device repairs, bead work, floor mats, saloon, baking, and tailoring. This is done by downloading YouTube videos that they show to the participants and teach them step by step up to the final product.

Mobile phone literacy where people are trained on how to use mobile phones for accessing various services. PL1 for instance trains both those who have smart phones and button phones whereas PL2 only trains those with smart phones. Some of the areas they handle are how to create passwords and change them, pay bills using mobile phones, receive and send money, access information on different aspects.

Other services: Two libraries PL1 and PL2 offer free internet services to the users who desire to use the library. PL2 on the other hand offers internet at a minimum fee accessed for a week. Other services include assisting users in creating email addresses, training on how to maintain relationships using mobile phones, and appropriate dressing. These were reported by only the staff in Public Libraries 1 and 2.

The Target groups

Question was asked to establish the categories in the community who benefit from the training. The libraries gave different responses. From PL1 and PL3 all categories of people regardless of whether they had formal education or not are admitted for digital literacy classes. While PL2 admits those who can read and write.

In their own words,

> "……We take all categories of people on account that we also use the local language to train the participants. Said the participant from PL3…."

"……. I categorise the participants in different groups and train them differently. Those who don't have basic knowledge, I first teach them on how to power the computer…" Responded the participant from PL1

Another question was asked to know the categories of people who benefit from the community. From the responses, women and youth were the special categories taken into consideration. However, from PL1 primary dropouts are also among the targeted groups.

Duration of training

The participants were asked about the duration of the training. From their responses, most of these training ranged between one month to two months. And they said that at the end of the training, the participants are awarded certificates.

Community awareness on availability of digital literacy programme in the library

The participants were asked whether the community was aware about the availability of digital literacy programmes in the library. All the three staff from these libraries agreed and said the community were aware about the availability of digital literacy programmes at the library.

When asked how awareness was created, they answered that it was by placing posters on different noticeboards, through radio announcements, one on one, peer to peer, through friends, churches, Local Council and municipal council noticeboards. Among these methods, only PL3 used radio announcements paid for from the district budget. The other two libraries did not use radio programs. According to one of the participants from the libraries that did not use radio to carry out announcements, this is what he had to say:

"………We don't carry out radio announcements, as there is no budget for placing radio announcements………"

The impact of the digital programs in community

In assessing the impact of the digital literacy programme in relation to community empowerment. The participants were asked whether digital literacy was having impact within the community. All the three participants affirmed that digital literacy was having an impact. From their own words, this was their responses:

"…. Some of the women I have trained have taken on the initiative of training other women although these women do it at a cost. Those who are computer literate use online to market their products and they have also opened up show rooms…"

"…Those trained have started their own business, one from leaning through YouTube now repairs phones, kettles, solars and laptops. Another has opened up a stationary shop….".

"…. Some have got jobs and others have opened up stationary shops…"

Partnerships

A question was asked to ascertain the institutions and organisations these libraries partner and collaborate with. According to their response, the following are partners, the Government of Uganda through the district authorities, National Library of Uganda, Uganda Communications Commission, Airtel Uganda, Electronic Information resources for libraries and individual well-wishers.

When they were asked the befits of these partnerships and collaborations, they all reported that they were able to attend refresher training courses in digital literacy, access to online information resources, free internet within the library, and that they also received computers from and through these partnerships. For instance, participant from PL3 in particular had this to report.

"….through support from Stanbic Bank, one computer lab was renovated, and the bank donated 40 chairs and 6 computers to the library……".

Participant from PL2 said this

"………..There is a sole individual from abroad who supports the digital literacy programme including salary enhancement to the staff carrying out the programme….".

Challenges encountered in carrying out digital literacy in Uganda

To answer the research question on what challenges do you face in carrying out digital literacy programme. The participants were asked whether they had challenges in promoting digital literacy. All the participants responded that they faced some challenges.

When they were asked to mention the challenges, all the three mentioned financial challenges, sometimes poor internet connectivity, unstable power supply, lack of support from Local council chairpersons, limited manpower, few computers, and lack of other ICT facilities.

Concerning finances, one participant made this statement

"…. there is sometimes no money to pay for electricity bills when it is disconnected, repair computers and carry out community outreach. As you can see, some computers are not working…."

Actually, when this library was visited, there was no electricity and when she was asked, her response was that electricity had been disconnected due to non-payments.

Another participant expressed the following concern,

"……if the library operates under minimal funding while public community, what would happen if it is shifted under Education department………".

"…….there is limited funding of the library, and LC's always ask for money". They assume that there is adequate funding. Even when they agree to assist during meetings, they behave contrary when we try to use them for mobilisation…….." Lamented another.

In relation to the staffing challenge, when one participant was asked how she manages to carry out all the activities being the only staff in the library, this is what she had to say;

"……. I train only twice a week and during the time of training, I close the other section for reading. However, the Municipal council has advertised for two more staff………"

Strategies to overcome some of the challenges

These participants were asked about the strategies they use to overcome some of the challenges. One library reported of charging a minimum fee on internet access, and also the participants pay some money for the training. According to him, this money assists to maintain the computers and facilitates the volunteer staff.

In his own words
> "........We agreed in a meeting that participants pay a minimum fee, and besides people   always   value things they pay for..."

The other two libraries could not charge any fee due to political reasons. Actually, one had this to say.
> ".......... charging money will make one to lose their job.............."

Another responded
> "......the politicians told us not to charge any money, that it is a public library and they [politicians] do not want to lose votes from the public......"

In trying to overcome the challenge of few computers, they train the participants in two shifts. Morning and afternoon sessions for PL2, while PL3 handles the two shifts between 9:00-1:00pm. PL3 admits only few participants per session.

As a solution to limited staff, PL3 trains four times a week and in the morning hours while PL1 trains only twice a week.

Discussion of findings

Status of public libraries in Uganda
The findings from the study indicate that the public libraries in western Uganda are under staffed seen by the few staff who have to carry out training, continue with the daily library routines, carry out community outreach, attend meetings, workshops, conferences and even advance in their carriers. As thus, the training is scheduled for few days a week for most libraries. This is an indication that in as much as they would want to be effective, they cannot, otherwise, their other roles could be neglected. This agrees with (Eze Jacintha, 2013; Ahmed and Sargent, 2021; Adedokun and Zulu, 2022) who said that public libraries are understaffed and some find it difficult to advance in their carriers due to the activities that they have to carry out.

Availability of ICT Facilities
The findings further revealed that although these libraries have computers connected to the internet and WiFi that supports training, the computers were few, and some were not working. These libraries did not have projectors, and only one library had a generator. However, these libraries have tried to be innovative by having two training sessions. Although there is still a limit to the number of participants they can admit for training per session. This is an indication that libraries are trying to close the digital gap between those who can afford and those who cannot afford internet within the community these libraries function in. This agrees with Lipeikaite *et al.* (2022) that public libraries are trying to close the digital literacy gap within the communities.

Strategies for promoting digital literacy for community empowerment.
As a measure to close the digital literacy gap and empower the communities, public libraries in Western Uganda are creating awareness within the community about the availability of digital literacy programmes in the library. This is through advertising, marketing, and advocacy. On account that they handle a mixed population (illiterate, semi-illiterate and literate), the common promotional materials are posters, radio

announcements, face to face, and peer to peer. Churches, council noticeboards, village Local Council at level one are the platforms they use for creating awareness. According to Pegrum (2019), awareness is instrumental in making the community to know about the existence of a service or product.

These training are on face to face and hands on carried out within the library where they introduce the learners to basic computers packages such as Microsoft word and excel, publishing, website designing, email and online marketing. This is in line with the model proposed by Eshet (2012) and UNESCO 2018 guidelines that there should be a component of information literacy skills acquisition. However, if these people are not supported to continue practicing and putting these skills to use, then it becomes a wastage of time and money. This is due to the fact that majority of the communities cannot afford internet bundles, do not even own computers leave alone mobile smart phones.

In trying to empower the communities, public libraries in Uganda have taken on another task of empowering the youth and women with some life and vocational skills on making liquid soap, shoes, device repairs, bead work, floor mats, saloon, baking, and tailoring. This assists those who are not gainfully employed to have what to do for survival. Actually, the benefits of these training have made some to get gainful employment, those who have begun businesses after the training are using online platforms to market their products. This is in agreement with Pegrum (2019) in relation to the empowerment, those who complete the training are awarded certificates that assists them to look for employment in the current digital economy. Abiddin, (2022) notes that offering attractive benefits to boost participation in engaging activities are key getting benefits of digital literacy.

Mobile literacy is another programme public libraries in Uganda have taken on as a way of promoting digital literacy within the communities. This is due to the fact that Mobile devices in the current era can be used to do a lot of things such as accessing information resources, mobile banking, online services, marketing products and services to mention but a few. When the society knows how to utilise mobile devices, then their lives can be enhanced. However, according to the findings some members among the community do not own smart phones, as thus, they are only taught the basic usage of mobile devices such as how to send and receive mobile money. This agrees with (Gillwald and Mothobi, 2019) who said that there is still a challenged with ownership of mobile devices in Uganda where only 9% have access to mobile devices. Even those who own such, majority among them do not have smart phones that cannot do so many things. This could be as a result of low standards of living among the community.

One of the enhancers of digital literacy is availability of internet for accessing information for empowerment. Airtel Uganda, Uganda Communication Commission and National library of Uganda are supporting the public libraries in Uganda to have access to internet. This is assisting the libraries to facilitate information literacy training. And also, as a means of reducing the information access gap between those who could be able to afford data bundles and those who cannot afford. Public Libraries in other countries offer internet services to the community as an enhancer to support those who are not able to afford access. Community development is a collective and planned effort that needs action in every level of society as asserted by Abiddin, (2022) the libraries also partner with other national and international bodies such as Electronic Information resources for libraries [eIFL], Stanbic and other individual well-wishers. Within and outside the country.

Another free service they offer to the community besides digital literacy training are internet access, creating email addresses for those who would want, training on how to maintain relationships using mobile phones, and appropriate dressing especially for the youth.

Challenges encountered in carrying out digital literacy in Uganda

Public libraries in Uganda face almost similar challenges, key among the challenges included financial challenges, sometimes poor internet connectivity, unstable power supply, lack of support from Local council chairpersons, limited manpower, limited facilities to mention but a few. This is evident by the number of staffs in these libraries, lack of availability of some facilities like projectors, stand by generators, few computers, and space limitations. This partly agrees with the findings of Ahmed and Sargenta (2019), that one among the challenges of digital literacy is community attitude and financial resources. Although Abiddin, (2022) asserts that community attitude was a main challenged in carrying out digital programs in public libraries, this challenge was not faced by public libraries in Uganda. May be this could have been due to the newness of the digital literacy in Uganda and the communities are eager to embrace it. The only negative attitude cited was from some LC's who wanted some money for mobilisation, yet this is a free initiative taken up by public libraries.

From the conceptual framework, availability of ICT facilities, community acceptance is key in promoting digital literacy for community empowerment. Besides the limited funding, most of these libraries are not encouraged to be innovative and create avenues for generating income. Yet this would have assisted them in carrying out some activities such as computer repairs (Mohan *et al.*, 2020), outreach and hiring volunteers to assist support limited manpower. This could be due to the fact that the role libraries play in communities are not always recognised and valued as opined by Adedokun and Zulu, (2022) yet these public libraries could be digital literacy hubs with well stocked computers for supporting rural communities in Uganda where 91% have no access to smart phones and computers (Gillwald and Mothobi, 2019).

Strategies to overcome some of the challenges

As a strategy to overcome some of the challenges, Public libraries in Western Uganda train the participants in shifts, few days a week, so as to overcome the issues few computers and staff. Through partnerships they have been able to get support towards the digital literacy programmes. This agrees with Adedokun and Zulu (2022) that public libraries need to be innovative in the current era to be able to supplement their budgets.

Conclusions

Public Libraries in Uganda are in the front line of promoting digital literacy within their communities through different strategies such as community outreach, face to face and hands on training. Where members within the community are taught mobile phone literacy, computer skills in Microsoft packages, e-mail communication and liquid soap, and shoes making. These libraries also provide information and internet access to the community members in a bid to close the access gaps. However, they encounter a number of challenges such as limited funding, unstable power supply, few ICT facilities, few staff within the libraries, to mention but a few. There is therefore a need for the government to increase funding, recruit more staff if these libraries are to perform their roles, and also develop a national digital skills

framework that would guide governmental policy programme, and standards for digital skills. Through the Uganda Communications Commission, all Internet service providers should be mandated to provide free internet to the community libraries in Uganda as way of paying back to the community. Librarians in close proximity to public libraries should avail themselves to support training in these libraries in form of community outreach. The local governments should permit the libraries to be innovative and have alternative sources of income in these public libraries.

Acknowledgement

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