

## ABSTRACT

The increasing interconnection with the Internet and the availability of digital materials are endangering the historical significance of physical library spaces. This rise in ICTs and enhanced digital access to information may further explain the decline in university library circulation statistics. As a result, many universities may consider physical libraries obsolete and, in some instances, be threatened with a shutdown if library management fails to demonstrate its value. Motivated by the above preceding argument, I set out to investigate how library users interact with physical environments in the digital age using a multi-site ethnographic research design. Data were collected through observation (Seating sweeps and participant observation), semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions. Four areas—sanctuary, collaborative, interactive, and community spaces were purposively selected for the study. For this study, I drew on the Spatial Triad and Proxemics theories, which seek to provide insights into how people utilise, produce, and replicate spaces, therefore, these theories were suitable for establishing man's perception and space production process. The study findings revealed that physical libraries are multidimensional spaces where students engage in both academic and non-academic activities. Additionally, they facilitate access and use of physical and digital resources, ICTs equipment, individual and group activities, and consultation with librarians. The study also established that users' meaning of library spaces was shaped by their behaviour and experiences, and as a result, users' meanings were constructed through five lenses, i.e. personal productive, social, knowledge hubs, "dead", and through previous experiences. Despite the unprecedented challenges revealed by the users, the study concludes that the physical university libraries are popular 'bedrock' and academic metaphors, as well as a networked environment that addresses design challenges, spatial practices, and lived experiences. I recommend harnessing the potential of physical library spaces through value co-creation, marketing, increased funding and alignment spaces to users' needs. This study highlights that users' perceptions influence usage patterns, preferences, and meaning and promote an inefficient use of library resources, which builds on studies that have constructed library spaces as physical and symbolic.