

# MUK needs sh10b for library

By Agnes Nantambi

Makerere University needs sh10b to construct a modern library at the main campus, vice-chancellor, Prof. John Ddumba Ssentamu said during the World Library Day.

The celebrations, under the theme, *Libraries transforming society*, were held at the college of health sciences (CHS) gardens at the New Mulago Hospital complex.

Ddumba observed that the current library is faced with a number of challenges, ranging from having old literature such as newspapers, books and chairs, which do not reflect the university's performance.

"We need to digitalise the entire library, install new materials, expand it and install new chairs. But this can only be done if we get enough funding, either from the Government or well-wishers of Makerere University," he said.

He revealed that the university library only receives about sh50m annually to facilitate its work in the departmental libraries and college libraries, which he said was insufficient

## BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ The university librarian revealed that although the budget for books was ring-fenced, the library had not received money for books in a long time.

Prof. Hellen Byamugisha, the university librarian, observed that inadequate funding, understaffing and limited space, especially in college libraries are some of the major challenges.

"Although the budget for books was ring-fenced, the library has not received money for books in a long time.

Library services operate on average 13-15 hours a day. Therefore, it is important that adequate staffing is guaranteed for all the operational hours," she said.

Byamugisha complained that when the college system was introduced, book bank libraries were supposed to be merged into college's libraries, but there is no

space in many of the colleges for a college library.

"For example, the college of health sciences has 22 departmental book bank libraries. Albert Cook was originally built to serve 200 students, but we now have over 2,000 of them. This means that we need real libraries," she said.

Byamugisha stressed that the library is committed to full automation of its functions and services, but said it requires a substantive budget and support.

## Research hub

Byamugisha explained that the university library currently serves a population of over 30,000 users, consisting of Makerere students and external students, over 1,000 Makerere staff and external researchers.

Byamugisha said the celebrations were organised at the CHS to recognise their contribution in the academic and research activities of the university, Uganda and the rest of the world.

"Researchers in CHS have published the highest number of academic papers in the university and have hence immensely

contributed to the ranking and web visibility of Makerere University," she said.

The principal of CHS, Charles Ibingira, said the Albert Cook Library, which is attached to the college, has supported the college and the medical school to grow and consolidate the excellent track record in health professional training and research.

This has ultimately enhanced the university's visibility and ranking to the current position of second in Africa in research and number three overall.

"It has helped our researchers win grants and contracts, promote new technologies, boost networking and embrace digital revolution," he said.

Ibingira, however, complained of dilapidation, inadequate airtime for wireless Internet, few computers, old furniture and limited access to some international resources among others.

The University Council chairperson, Charles Wana Etyem, advised the college leaders to fast-track the issues which do not require money as they await funding.