

AFRICAN UNION		UNION AFRICAINE
الاتحاد الأفريقي		UNIÃO AFRICANA
<p style="text-align: center;"> AFRICAN COURT ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS COUR AFRICAINE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME ET DES PEUPLES P.O Box 6274 Arusha, Tanzania - Telephone: +255 732 979506/9; Fax: 255 732 979503 </p>		

LIBRARY POLICY DOCUMENT

NOVEMBER 2022

Original language: English

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I. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

Review of Court Policies was part of the Annual Work Plan of the Court for 2022. In this exercise, the Court undertook to review its various policies. The Library Policy Document was one of them.

This Library policy document lays out the guidelines the library will employ to guide it in the delivery of library services to its users. The policy informs users of the framework for the continued development and delivery of library services in the library of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AFCHPR).

1. The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights library

- a)** A library is generally defined as a collection of information resources. *The Guidelines for Libraries of Government Departments* prepared and approved by the International Federation of Library Associations-IFLA (IFLA, 2007) classifies governmental libraries according to legal task and application, grouping them into three types:
 - i. Libraries of the legislative: These are parliamentary libraries established to support parliaments or congresses, which make laws.
 - ii. Libraries of the executive: These support government ministries, which are responsible for implementation of laws. This type also includes state and national libraries, which are depositories for the printed cultural heritage of a country,
 - iii. Libraries of the judiciary: These assist the Constitutional, Supreme and High Courts, which ensure the enforcement of laws.

- b)** The Library of the AFCHPR, with its specialty being the African human rights system, fits the category of judiciary libraries. In supporting and serving the Court, which aims to serve 55 African Union Member States, the Library is classified at the international level. Therefore, by

definition, the Library of the AFCtHPR is an international judiciary library.

2. Vision of the library

To be Africa's leading center of excellence of information resources on the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and all other relevant African and applicable international human rights instruments.

3. Mission of the Library

Founded on the central importance of knowledge and information to the practice of law, the library exists to provide efficient library and information services to the AFCtHPR. It supports the judicial activities and legal endeavors of the Judges, Legal Officers and staff of the Court and approved external guest users. The library also provides services to the technical and support activities of the Court.

II. OPENING HOURS

The library shall open its doors Monday to Friday as from 0800 hrs to 1700hrs. Except otherwise decided, the library will remain closed on weekends and public holidays recognized by the Court. The Library Online Catalogue and electronic library platforms shall be available on the website at all times.

III. ELIGIBILITY AND CONDITIONS FOR USE

The library shall be open for use by judges of the Court, staff of the registry and members of the public. Judges and staff of the registry have automatic use. Members of the public can access the library and use the resources there but cannot take them out.

IV. COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

The Library will provide a diversified collection of up-to-date, relevant and authoritative information resources that meet the information and research needs of the users by ensuring a balance between the development of on-site print collections and access to electronic information resources.

1. Philosophy of collection development

The philosophy of collection development will be user oriented as opposed to library oriented. This means that the collection will be developed based on the user needs. The Library collects information resources in both print and electronic forms, and in the official languages of the African Union. In this age of information explosion, the information resources should also:

- a)** Express the truth seriously and objectively, with intellectual depth and without prejudice
- b)** Aspire to and attain high literary, ethical and moral standards and eschew frivolity and superficiality.

2. Responsibility for selection

The Librarian will regularly scan publishers' catalogues, check book reviews and continuously compile a list of user requests as they are submitted. Inputs will also be sought from judges, and the public registry staff during the annual library user surveys. From this, the Librarian will compile a final recommended list for purchase. The recommended lists will then submitted to the Procurement Unit for acquisition.

3. Principles of selection

In selecting new items for purchase, the following principles will be used:

- a)** Relationship of the item to the existing collection.
- b)** Needs of current research needs.
- c)** Timeliness of the material.

- d) Scope and authority of the author and/or the publisher.
- e) Cost of item/subscription.
- f) Format (print or electronic).
- g) Housing and space considerations.
- h) User requests.

4. Selection Tools

The library receives and evaluates various selection tools from commercial and non-commercial publishing houses such as catalogues, bibliographies, book reviews, abstracting and indexing services. The library, through the Librarian also interacts with local, regional and international booksellers to find out materials of interest they may have for the library. On a continuous day to day basis, the library will make a note of the resources that are in high demand. These are then included in the purchase list for the next order as new titles or extra copies if available in the library.

5. The Acquisitions process

The acquisition process is as follows:

- a) A user needs assessment survey is conducted
- b) Members and staff of the Court send their requests to the Librarian.
- c) Librarian compiles a list of resources to be acquired
- d) The Librarian then forwards the list to the Procurement Unit for purchase.
- e) Acquisition of library information resources: Procurement of all library information materials including books, journals, electronic journals and databases.
- f) Processing of library information resources: by accessioning, cataloguing, classification, and indexing.
- g) Send alerts to users who had requested for the items.
- h) Circulation: To facilitate access of the library materials by the users in order to enable library patrons to borrow and use information materials

6. User needs survey

The library shall conduct quarterly user needs surveys in order to establish the information needs of all users. The surveys will be mainly electronic, but manual methods may be employed where necessary. The findings of these surveys will also be used as a guide in the selection and acquisition of library resources.

7. Key subject areas

The key subject areas in which the library acquires materials are as follows;

- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
- African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (decisions, session reports, etc)
- African Human Rights System
- African Legal systems
- Human rights in general
- Other international human rights systems (UN, European, Inter-American, , Asian, Arab etc)
- International Courts (e.g International Court of Justice, International Criminal Court, European Court of Human Rights, Inter-American Court of Human rights, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, International Criminal, Tribunal for Rwanda, ad hoc Tribunals for Sierra Leone / Cambodia / East Timor, etc.)
- International Law
- Regional integration
- Governance
- Case law
- Constitutional Law, Criminal Law, Civil Law, Comparative law, administrative law, Labour Law, Migration Law, Environmental Law.
- International law, international public law, private law, etc
- Reference collection (biographies, bibliographies, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, prospectuses of human rights courses, catalogues, annual reports etc.)
- Documents and Publications of the African Union
- Official languages of the African Union.

Others: As per the other units of the Court such as management, finance and administration, ICT, communication, languages, protocol, and security.

8. Formats of the collection

In responding to the various research demands of the members of the Court, the library develops its collection in various formats. These are:

- Professional texts and monographs
- Reference materials (biographies, bibliographies, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, prospectuses, catalogues, annual reports etc.)
- Regional and international dailies (General)
- Regional and international journals (General)
- Electronic Journals (E-journals)
- Electronic Books (E-books)
- Selected Audio-Visual materials (CD, DVD, CD-ROM, VCD)
- Legal reports and works from across the African continent.
- Electronic databases
- These and other academic works in the area of Human Rights
- Professional and scholarly journals in the area of Human Rights.

9. Duplicate copies

These will be dictated by demand. For books published in one language only, the library will buy up-to a maximum of 2 copies depending on the projected demand. In cases where a particular title is published in more than one of the official languages of the African Union, the library will buy two copies in each of these languages. Purchase of duplicate copies will be dictated by demand

10. Languages of the collection

The library stocks information materials in the official languages of the African Union, which are:

- a) English,

- b) French,
- c) Portuguese
- d) Arabic
- e) Swahili
- f) Spanish

11. Gifts / Donations

The Court Library appreciates and encourages gifts and donations of useful materials to its library with the understanding that the library is free to use gifts in the most beneficial or effective way. Donations will be evaluated on an individual basis. The library shall have the prerogative to reject books that do not contribute to the mission and goals of the library. The Registrar shall authorize the disposal of unneeded donations. Below are the criteria used in evaluating gifts:

- a) Suitability of the title to the collection
- b) Rare or unique characteristic of the material being donated
- c) Acquisition costs, including transportation, processing and storage
- d) Conditions imposed by the donor.

If the gift meets the criteria listed above, the Court may pay for the shipping of the gift subject to availability of funds. The Registrar will provide a letter of acknowledgement which includes a simple description of the contents of each gift.

12. Collection development/Acquisitions partnerships

The Court recognizes that its library cannot be self-sufficient and thus actively seeks to establish mutual resource-sharing arrangements with other Libraries both locally and internationally. To that effect, the Court shall continue to develop cooperation agreements with the following:

- a) Other international and regional tribunals
- b) International organizations
- c) Regional Economic Communities

- d) Schools of law
- e) Capacity Building Organizations
- f) Non-governmental organisations in human rights and related areas.
- g) Development and support partners.

13. Weeding

The library recognizes the need to continually evaluate the collection in response to the changing nature and needs of its users. The purpose of weeding is to evaluate the current collection in conjunction with the selection of new materials to maintaining a current and useful collection. The Registry will analyse the proposed list of weeded items for the purpose of possibly moving them to the archives donation to other institutions that may need them, or for sale. The library will circulate the proposed list to judges and staff for their comments and input. Materials potentially subject to weeding include:

- a) Those that are no longer timely or that possess insignificant research value
- b) Books which contain inaccurate, obsolete information
- c) Superseded editions
- d) Materials for which there is insufficient space to house them
- e) Those with little or no circulation histories
- f) Titles which have been duplicated by electronic methods
- g) Duplicate copies of works no longer in demand
- h) Books which are in poor physical condition, beyond repair

Weeded items selected for donation will need to be approved by the registrar.

14. Retention of newspapers and journals

- a) **General Newspapers**
 - i. These are periodicals that deal with general issues and not specific to one subject area. They are delivered daily or weekly. With time, they take up a huge chunk of premium archival space.

- ii. The library will pick out the articles that are relevant to human rights and the mission of the Court. These will then be scanned and added onto the e-library.
- iii. The remainder of the journals will then be disposed of through sale or any other method approved by the registrar.

b) Journals on Legal issues and Human Rights

These are journals that are directly related to the mission of the Court and cover human rights and related aspects. The library will bind them and store them in the reference section for future use.

c) Electronic resources

The library has resources in electronic formats. These include electronic books and journals. Usage of e-resources will be monitored and databases with low usage may be cancelled. Price increases and changes of content may result in cancellation of subscription. Subscription to items identified for cancellation will not be renewed.

V. ORGANISATION OF INFORMATION RESOURCES

In order to attain efficiency in access and retrieval of the information materials, the library will organise the collection using internationally approved systems. This will ensure efficient identification and retrieval.

1. Cataloguing format

The cataloguing format to be used will be the standard Marc 21, or such other platforms as may be decided from time to time.

2. Cataloguing rules

The library will use the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules 2nd ed., or such other platforms as may be decided from time to time.

3. Classification

- a) Most of the collection of the Court library contains social science materials meant for both research and reference purposes.
- b) As such it will employ a classification system that is adequately detailed and that provides for a systematic approach to resource organization for a social science collection. The selected system may be changed as need arises.

VI. LIBRARY HUMAN RESOURCES

The Library currently has three staff members against a recommended number of six. To improve the quantity and quality of its staff, the library will;

1. Continue to lobby with management for adequate human resources to support its work until it achieves the recommended number of 6 professional staff members.
2. Develop and maintain an internal organizational structure which supports a commitment to user needs and emphasizes flexibility, cooperation and effective communication.
3. Provide leadership which actively supports growth and development, while encouraging and utilizing a consultative style of management and decision-making.
4. Encourage staff to develop professionally and academically through courses leading to appropriate qualifications.
5. Allocate resources to ensure provision of materials and equipment to enable staff to deliver effectively.
6. Establish mechanisms for the regular assessment of processes to ensure the efficient and effective use of library human resources.

VII. LIBRARY SERVICES

The library shall employ innovation and creativity to design, improve and offer quality library services that will satisfactorily meet the needs of the Court and its users. To this end the library shall:

- a)** Establish, promote and maintain a range and quality of services to meet the needs of the users, support the activities of the Court and lead to the optimal use of the library resources.
- b)** Develop timely and cost-effective services for delivery of information to clients, with a particular emphasis on removing barriers between people and information.
- c)** Enhance access to information resources in print and electronic formats.
- d)** Evaluate and improve service through the establishment of a variety of mechanisms to gather information about client needs.
- e)** Develop pro-active strategies to publicise its services to the users.
- f)** Periodic user education sessions will be held with select groups of users.
- g)** The Library will hold an annual Library Week event which aims at celebrating and highlighting the valuable role played by the Library in assisting the Court execute its mandate. It will also aim at promoting library use and support.

VIII. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

1. The library recognizes the significance of information communication technologies in library services. It will therefore:

- a)** Continuously review and implement new information technologies that are directly relevant and responsive to client needs.

- b)** Continuously develop its electronic library through expansion of infrastructural capacity, collection development and publicity.
- c)** Develop and maintain an infrastructure that combines the existing and emerging technologies required to further the library's mission.
- d)** For efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services, the library will use a suitable and cost-effective library management software or a combination of software. The library is currently using KOHA Library Management system, which is a free and open-source software (FOSS).
- e)** Develop comprehensive electronic catalogues and other databases of all its information materials and make them available on the library webpage and institutional intranet.
- f)** Maintain a vibrant library webpage through which users can access information about the library, the library catalogues, bulletins, library newsletters, alerts and relevant research bibliographies.
- g)** Create a library service that provides integrated user-friendly access to a range of locally created and remote information resources.
- h)** Give high priority to the libraries' participation in the development of networks to facilitate the widest possible sharing and dissemination of information in electronic formats.
- i)** Initiate and join programmes for the sharing of bibliographic data such as networking and library cooperation.
- j)** Periodically train users on how to use the library retrieval systems.
- k)** Ensure there are adequate cybersecurity mechanisms to prevent cyber and other threats.

IX. STOCK-TAKING

The library will carry out annual stock taking exercises. This will be done in the first two weeks of December by library staff assisted by the Stores Unit.

X. DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

The library shall:

1. In conjunction with the office of the registrar, the librarian will ensure that there is good insurance cover for staff, books, furniture and ICT equipment and all other property of the library.
2. In conjunction with the ICT department, work to ensure that library systems are guarded by reliable antivirus software.
3. To avoid damage from unexpected flooding, books shall not be shelved on the lower shelves.
4. Books that need repair will be set aside and send for bindery.
5. Back-ups of Library databases will be made regularly and stored offshore.
6. To avoid unauthorized removal of library items, there will always be a library staff member at all times when the library is open.
7. Apart from the main entrance, the library shall always have an emergency exit.
8. In case of fire, the alarm will be sounded. All staff and clients should evacuate the library immediately.
9. The librarian will work with the admin department to ensure that fire extinguishers in the library are regularly maintained so as to remain functional.
10. The library will always have an efficient book security system to prevent theft and unauthorized removal.
11. Library items will be insured through a policy of the Court or the Union.

XI. ELECTRONIC RESOURCES (E-RESOURCES)

1. General guideline

In the spirit of the mission of the African Court, the library will subscribe to electronic resources in support of the mission of the Court and registry.

To that end, the library will make resources available in electronic formats, taking into account the information needs of the Court and registry staff, cost effectiveness, technical requirements, user authentication, licensing and preservation needs.

2. Content

The content of the electronic resources to be acquired will be as follows:

- a)** The formats will include text, audio and visual formats.
- b)** The library will make electronic resource subscriptions, which will include purchases of databases, single e-journal titles and e-journal packages, individual e-book titles and collections, electronic reference works (encyclopaedias, dictionaries, directories, and handbooks), among others.
- c)** Freely available resources will be made available where they support the information needs, work and mandate of the Court and registry.
- d)** It will also include full text papers, researches and other works carried out by Court and registry staff.

3. Purchasing and subscription

Purchase of electronic resources will be done in one or more of the following methods:

- a)** On a direct basis with the supplier.
- b)** Whenever they serve the best interests of the Court, the library will seek to join consortia in order to take advantage of aggregated purchasing agreements and resource sharing for library resources.
- c)** Electronic resource packages will be preferred where they offer relevant content at better value for money compared to purchasing single titles, though the content is usually decided by the supplier and is non-negotiable.

4. Access to the e-resources

a) Access Guidelines

Library clients will access the electronic resources under the following guidelines:

- i All library electronic resources will be made available through the African Court Electronic Library platform. This platform is available through the library webpage of the African Court website. Users will be periodically notified of new additions to the e-library.
- ii Freely available resources: these will be made accessible through provided links, both on and off the seat of the Court.
- iii Copyrighted and controlled resources: Users both on and off the seat of the Court will be required to log in with their User IDs and passwords. Users must observe fair use guidelines in compliance with national and international copyright laws and provisions of license agreements with database providers.
- iv Available resources must be used for personal, non-commercial purposes in adherence to international and local copyright provisions.
- v Improper usage: Users must avoid improper use of the electronic resources. This generally includes, but is not limited to, excessive use, use of robots and auto crawlers, downloading of entire books/journals, printing numerous copies of a single article, or publishing articles made available through the databases. Unauthorized and improper use of the resources will revocation of access.
- vi Library users must agree to abide by the terms of use of the various resources made available to them, as provided by the library and participating publishers or their agents
- vii Computers and internet connectivity will be made available to provide access to e-resources in the library. Users outside the seat of the Court will need to arrange for their own connectivity.

- viii Users will be notified of new additions and other amendments to the resources as and when they occur.
- ix New resources/links will be catalogued and added to the library database as required.
- x The Library will liaise with the IT Department to provide access to e-resources in a user-friendly manner, adopting new technologies as they emerge and as appropriate.

b) Open Access Resources

The library will selectively provide access points to relevant resources with free, or open access. These include but are not limited to resources of international organizations, regional and international tribunals, regional economic communities, governments, supported abstracting and indexing services, publications of scholarly societies, etc.

c) Ownership vs access

Ownership will be preferred over access, but the library will consider access for budgetary reasons or publishers' conditions. When feasible and appropriate, the library will strive to maintain perpetual access to electronic content.

5. Selection

In selecting the electronic resources, the following guidelines will be used:

- i. The same principles of selection and assessment for print resources outlined in section 4.2 of this policy will apply to selection of electronic resources.
- ii. In identifying which electronic resources to subscribe to, the library will request for input by all stakeholders. The library will review all recommended input based on its established collection development guidelines and procedures.

- iii. Requests for inputs are usually mad twice a year. Input will also be collected continuously during day-to-day interactions with library users. Publisher catalogues and notifications will also be considered in identifying electronic resources for purchase.

6. Free trials

Where available, the library will subscribe to free trials of new electronic resources in order to evaluate them before purchase. During such trials, the library will make efforts to gather feedback from faculty and students on the resource's worth to researchers.

XII. LIBRARY RULES AND REGULATIONS

The library shall adopt rules and regulations to govern all users of the library as follows:

1. General

- a) The library is a place for silent and private study. Users must therefore maintain silence at all times.
- b) All users are required to present an identity card or similar document before using the library.
- c) Library materials must not be marked, defaced, mutilated or annotated in any way.
- d) Consultations and discussions in the Library are strictly prohibited. The Court provides other areas for such activity.
- e) Users must observe copyright regulations and provision in respect of all library items.
- f) The PCs in the library are meant for searching the library database and the Internet only.
- g) Readers are requested to use the coat stand and baggage area provided at the library entrance for their personal belongings.

2. Borrowing

- a)** The number of items that a user may borrow at any given time will be as follows:
 - i. Judges and the Registrar: 7 books for 3 months
 - ii. Legal officers: 5 books for 1 month.
 - iii. Other staff members: 5 books for one month.
 - iv. The librarian may, if need be, recall borrowed books at any time.
 - v. External users: These cannot borrow and take away items. They can only use items in the library, with the permission of the Registrar.

- b)** Users must immediately inform the library of changes in their contact address.
- c)** Loss or damage of any library items must be immediately reported to the library as soon as is practical.
- d)** No library item shall be taken out of the library without due procedure.
- e)** Books/Journals must be left on the tables where they were used. Users should not return them to the shelves.
- f)** Lost or damaged items shall be replaced at the cost of the borrower, at the prevailing market rates and an administrative fee to be determined by the Finance Unit.
- g)** The library will not engage in interlibrary loans until such a time when the collection is large enough. It will however seek to obtain items for its users from other libraries.
- h)** Overdue charges will be imposed on users who fail to return books when they are due. This will be charged at the rate of 1 USD for every day that is overdue.

3. Conduct in the library

- a)** Mobile phones must be on silent or plane mode while in the library.
- b)** Discussions and meetings of any kind are not allowed in the library.

- c) Smoking and eating are not permitted in the library.
- d) Notices may not be displayed in the library without the approval of the Librarian.
- e) Library users should take care of personal items while in the library. The Court shall not accept responsibility for loss or damage to such items.
- f) Bags, briefcases, raincoats, and umbrellas shall not be taken into the library, but should be left at the baggage area near the exit.
- g) Desks and furniture should not be moved without the permission of the Librarian.
- h) Users should be courteous to other users and staff at all times.

XIII. REVISION OF THE LIBRARY POLICY

This policy shall enter into force on 2 December 2022 at Arusha, Tanzania, and will be eligible for amendment after every 3 years.