

Resource Sharing for Academic Libraries: The Nec Essity

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Abstract

The paper examines the need for resource sharing among academic libraries in Nigeria. Most academic libraries are being required to operate more efficiently. Due to increasing amount of knowledge and greater diversity in demands; static or decreasing library budget in terms of real worth, increasing cost of processing documents and their information contents, explosion in published output, increasing bibliographic access of literature through internet and off-line database on CDs. It is becoming increasingly difficult for any academic library in Nigeria to meet the demands of its own users. There is need to motivate librarians for resource sharing to ensure maximum utilization of available financial, manpower, documents, equipment, accommodation, electronically, other library facilities and services. The resource sharing in libraries is a powerful tool for both increasing productivity and enhancing services to meet the changing needs of library users. Barriers associated with resource sharing and ways of dealing with them were identified. The benefits of resource sharing for effective access and utilization of information resources and services were highlighted. The paper concludes that since resource sharing in academic libraries is a boost to both library resources and services, academic libraries in Nigeria should co-ordinate their efforts and plan for the development of sustainable resource sharing so that maximum use can be made of limited resources.

Keywords: Academic Libraries, resource sharing, information access, information utilization, Nigeria

Introduction

Academic libraries are part of an academic institutions set up. Therefore they exist to serve the objectives of their parent organization. Every academic library programme must support the total programme of its institution. In other words, academic libraries should aim to advance the functions of its organization. According to Wilson (2010), the well administered academic library directs its activities towards the fulfillment of these functions. By accumulation and organizing books, manuscripts, periodicals, audio-visual resources, e-books and journals etc. academic library serves as an invaluable aid in the conservation of knowledge and ideas and as an active force in the teaching, learning, study, and research and extension programme of academic institutions.

Today, it is virtually not possible for any academic library in Nigeria, however big and rich, to acquire all the information resources that are required for a comprehensive coverage of all subjects field or to keep up with the rapid rising flow of new publications. No academic library as such can claim to be self-sufficient in meeting all the information needs of its clientele. There appears to be a wide gap between the type of information support and services required in academic libraries and what is available at present in our academic institutions. Here, resources sharing promises to be an effective measure to solve some of these problems and allow productive use of the available documentary sources for the reading academic community. It maybe stated that the future development and success of the academic libraries depend greatly on how much and how efficiently they cooperate with each other in sharing their resources. Library resources consist of finance, manpower documents, equipment, accommodation, other library facilities and services.

With the ever-increasing number in the enrolment of students, academic libraries should as a matter of urgency consider co-operation. This is because the recurring dwindling funding and high cost of scholarly materials makes it almost impossible for the library to acquire most of the needed information resources to support teaching, learning and research activities of academic institutions; resource sharing therefore becomes a very useful avenue for academic libraries to access those needed scholarly materials.

In the word of **Kent** (1990), “the characteristics of information storage and retrieval in our time together with the heavy and often unpredictable demands of users indicate that resources sharing are the only way for academic libraries to survive”.

Dougherty and **Hughes** (1991) observed that libraries and library services were no longer individual academic institutions problems and that a collective approach is now absolutely essential. The only way evolved by academic libraries to improve their services to the user, is by broadening the base of information availability through resource sharing. In the same vain **Ejedafiru** (2003), Agreed that there is no way a single academic library can satisfy the demand of its users. But when libraries cooperate and make their resources accessible to one and another, we see results.

Academic libraries cannot dream of acquiring all the literature published world-wide individually, but the users have the right to ask for all. Thus academic libraries have to cooperate to share their resources so that every demand for document and services is not only from the library’s own collection but from the collections of other libraries also.

RESOURCE SHARING MEANING

Resource sharing is nothing but sharing of library resources by the participating libraries among themselves on the basis of the principle of co-operation. In such co-operative venture, it becomes possible for a user in any of the participating libraries to make use of the resources of not only his/her library but also the of resources the others. Thus through a resource sharing consortium, libraries can improve the total collection of reading materials, consolidate their technological capabilities and improve their information services to a larger user community. According to **Welden** (1999), resource sharing is a term used to describe organized attempts by libraries to share materials and services co-operatively so as to provide one another with resources that might otherwise not be available to an individual institution. It represents an attempt to expand the availability of specialized expensive or just plain not owned resources beyond the bounds of a single institution. **Nwalo** (2008) stated that the resources sharing as part of consortium building has become a critical success factor in the effectiveness and sustainability of academic and research library services. He sees resource sharing as method whereby libraries with common interest pool their materials, physical and human resources together in order to meet

their clientele needs much more than they could have done were they to depend on individual efforts. **Willis** (2009), explained that, the objective behind resource sharing is “obviously to make the greatest amount of best information available to the most users at the most reasonable cost possible” According to him, resource sharing denotes a mode of operation whereby functions are shared in common by a number of libraries. He further stated that the philosophy of resource sharing is ‘each for all and all for each’.

Sujatha (2000), states that resource sharing consists of a formal agreement/arrangement whereby materials, information and services provided by a variety of libraries are made available to all potential users. Libraries maybe of different places but agree to serve one another on the same basis as each serves its own clientele. The goal of resource sharing shall be to eventually provide every user with equal opportunity of access to the total information resource available which will satisfy the individual educational, working and cultural leisure time, needs and interest regardless the individual location.

Durance and Mclean (1998) stressed that resource sharing “is a method by which librarians can provide their clientele with access to information resources beyond the scope or means of their own library. Among librarian it is a time-honored tradition”

The Directory of academic library consortia cited by **Ikem and Nwalo** (2002) suggests the goals and objectives of resource sharing as follows:

- Assist members in the selection of materials.
- Purchase catalogue and process library materials.
- Co-ordinate co-operative acquisition, inter-library loans and reproduction of materials for the member libraries.
- Promote the development of programmes for the expanded use of library resource.
- Provide, through co-operative acquisition materials beyond the reach of individual libraries.
- Facilitates sharing of materials among members of the group.
- Co-operate in the development of technical service personnel.

FORMS OF RESOURCE SHARING

Resource sharing can take various forms Sujatha (2000), noted that, the time has arrived, when the concept of resource sharing would envelope all basic library functions right from acquisition to storage and issue of materials.

Resource sharing can be found in form of Inter-library loan, Co-operative delivery of services, Exchange of personnel and training facilities, Technical process, Co-operative acquisition, Co-operative storage, Co-operative processing etc.

Clayton and Gorman (2007), maintain that resource sharing implies sharing of library resources by participating libraries among themselves on the basis of mutual co-operation. According to him this can be implemented in the areas of documents, manpower, facilities, services, building, space or equipment.

Sangal (1999), emphasize that resource sharing does not involve just “improved bibliographic access or better document delivery or more co-operative collection development but a combination of activities in all three areas”.

Evans (2000), asserted by resource sharing, librarians means the sharing of library collection through a variety of activities including:

- i. Sharing of information on the holdings of co-operating libraries;
- ii. Reciprocal lending and borrowing of materials; and
- iii. Reciprocal services to user of the co-operating libraries.

Ameen (2008), in his discussion mentioned that resource sharing includes cooperative cataloguing, inter-library loan, document supply, document delivery, consortia, access services and other shared library services.

Co-operative approaches to library functions and services like inter-library functions and services such as loans, document delivery, creation of electronic resources, shared databases, storage, collection development, acquisitions, technical processing and cataloguing are what we call resource sharing. Resource sharing initiative may exist among university libraries or between university and polytechnic libraries or academic and public libraries. Some may even be among academic libraries and scholarly societies; libraries and organizations.

RATIONAL FOR RESOURCE SHARING

The underlying principles of resource sharing are:

- i. To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the participating libraries to serve the needs of the users.
- ii. To improve the availability of resources
- iii. Maximize the utilization of existing information resource/collections by sharing
- iv. Providing speedy access to information resource locates at different places through communication channels for mutual benefits.
- v. Reduction in all round cost; and
- vi. Avoided of unnecessary duplication of information materials and efforts.

PRE-REQUISITES FOR SUCCESS

Pre-requisites for fruitful resource sharing among academic libraries and its effectiveness depend to a large extent on the following factors:

- i. That primary responsibility for each type of library to its special clientele must be defined before resource sharing can be established to augment services.
- ii. That effective resource sharing depends upon adequate resources, administrative capability and efficient communication and overcoming problems of logistics.
- iii. Agreement to share currently owned materials (i.e. to permit access to the holdings among partners) with protocols, limitations and priorities carefully spelled out.
- iv. There should be agreement on acquisition policies both to ensure consistent development of holdings and to avoid redundancy when this is judged jointly to be unproductive.
- v. There should be agreement on bibliographic control. Best is standardized so that users of each participating library may have a consistent means of accessing the catalogue of others.
- vi. That although the primary responsibility of each library must be respected each library must realize their responsibility to the sharing of resource and assume its appropriate share of responsibility.
- vii. There should be an agreement on building up specialized collections in each participating library. A decision shall be taken jointly by the librarians whereby each agrees to spend more money on building certain specialized collections and thereafter, sharing these collection with others.

viii. Faith in the advantages of resource sharing on the part of participating libraries and mutual trust.

According to **Sujatha** (2000), other pre-requisite include definition of loan periods and renewals, procedures for earlier return of materials needed, payment for lost materials, preparation of union catalogues and other house-keeping (or book-keeper) chores.

A resource sharing venture will succeed only if the participating libraries perceive their responsibility within the given framework. There must be willingness to share. Otherwise, the programme will collapse.

BENEFITS OF RESOURCE SHARING

There is a great deal of literature on resource sharing among libraries emphasizing the importance of belonging to a resource sharing venture. **Mannan** (2009), believes that in the age of information explosion, there has been a growing problem with the collection, processing, storage and dissemination of information. He observes that due to duplication of investments in library holdings, the cost of providing service to the users become higher. He argues that resource sharing is the ultimate solution to the problem. Resource sharing among academic libraries has become necessity today on account of growing mutual interdependence to face the situation created by explosion of information and ever accelerating technology. The needs for academic libraries are growing day by day. To overcome this impediment, it is necessary for academic libraries to go for resource sharing (**Patil**, 2008). **OCLC** (2012) asserts that when a library belongs to a resource sharing network, more information, services and facilities are readily available and users' satisfaction is enhanced. **Mudd** and **Haven** (2008), claim that shortage are inevitable consequences of social and economic instability, and argue that resource sharing can resolve insufficient supplies. **Michaiko** and **Malpas** (2009), identify benefits of resource sharing, noting that for more than a century, library resource sharing in the United States has enabled individual libraries to save on costing while expanding the reach of local collections and services. **Eden** (2010), stated that the global information explosion, the cut in budgeting allocation, the rising costs and complexities of information resources as well as the imperative to provide the users with optimal access to needed information, make resource sharing initiative indispensable. Resource sharing among libraries is often seen as a response to

insufficient resource and increasing client and operational demands. However, resource sharing among libraries can generate range of positive benefits, including increased organizational efficiency and effectiveness. **Nwegbu, Echezona and Obijiofo** (2011), maintained that resource sharing bring about effective and efficient services through programs in cooperative acquisition, cooperative cataloguing, sharing of human resource and access to electronic database.

According to **Graves and Wuiff** (1990), through the process of shared acquisition, money and time are shared, wasteful duplication are avoided, and building up a sound and large collection is achieved. The information requirements of the users are becoming more and more diverse and duplication is avoided, and building up a sound and large collection is achieved. **Kent** (1990) reported that “there has been an explosion of information and the number of publications has increased enormously. The information requirements of the users are becoming more and more complex. The dormant or depleting budget also threatens the libraries. Time delay is also of the factors, he concluded that only resource sharing among libraries can plays an important role in removing these impossibilities.

THE BARRIERS OF RESOURCE SHARING

Resource sharing provides an enviable means of ensuring that library patrons receive adequate information resources and services in the libraries. This is principally because it helps libraries to own or have quick and unrestricted access to information resources and services needed by their teeming patrons which they would not have otherwise acquitted as a result of lean, financial resources allocated to these libraries. And in spite the unquantifiable advantages accruable from resource sharing among academic libraries in Nigeria, yet efficient and reliable resource sharing among academic libraries still remain a mirage. The major problems militating against this noble idea to some extent remain insurmountable

These are a large number of barriers, which come in the way of resource sharing venture, **Onuoha** (2008), stated that lack of strong networking facilities limits the effectiveness of resource sharing projects in academic libraries. As most of the libraries do not have local area Networks, access to the internet for the time being is limited to stand alone machine with modems.

The study by **Nkem** and **Nwalo** (2002), identified gross under funding; vast distance separating the libraries and lack of proper planning among others as some of the constraints to effective resource sharing among Nigeria academic libraries.

Ezekwe and **Bibiana** (2011) emphasized that lack of qualified and proper trained staff ,financial constraints, inadequate information resource and fear of document lost as major constraints to effective resource sharing among academic libraries.

Other constraint mentioned by **Ejidafiru** (2003), include inadequacy of existing resources, inadequate security of materials, uncooperative attitude of parents bodies, lack of policies, inflation, and unstable budgetary allocation, **Kumar** (2008), identifies fear of large libraries being overburdened, large libraries consider small libraries as parasites, custodial mentality of librarians, inefficient means of communications and cumbersome library procedure as barriers to resource sharing ventures. A generalized obstacle to resource sharing and access to information among academic libraries in Nigeria according to **Eden** (2010), are:

Lack of finance

Lack of well developed ICT infrastructure

Lack of requisite skill in ICT

Faculty of formation strategies

Unstable power supply

Low level conversation of local content for national and international access among others.

Like many useful initiative, resource sharing is faced with many constraint. However, there are ways out. If academic libraries in Nigeria begin to appreciate the usefulness of resource sharing, to their services, they will beat the barriers and forge ahead towards satisfying their clientele.

RESOURCE SHARING DEVELOPMENT EFFORT IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA.

The Nigeria resource sharing exercise was initially founded upon informal climate of cooperation; they were preoccupied with inter-library lending reference services and photo-Sproduction of materials. **Ikem** and **Nwalo** (2002) traced the history of library resource sharing in Nigeria to 1974, when the National Library of Nigeria initiated the gathering of a working

group on inter-library cooperation which gave birth to the ideas of a national union of catalogue (NUC) and the national union of list of serials (NULOSS) in resource sharing for efficient library services. This venture was followed by another conference on co-operative at Kaduna (Nwalo, 2006) for specialized subject acquisition in eight zones.

The university libraries have spearheaded effort towards resource sharing among libraries in Nigeria since 1980s. The committee of university librarians of Nigeria universities (CULNU) as far back as the 1980 made frantic to advance the development of Nigeria universities libraries through inter-library lending and cooperative acquisition. Under the auspices of this Committee the Nigerian Periodical Index was initiated. All the Universities under this scheme were expected to index local periodicals on cooperative basis and send to the university of JOS for editing and publication (**Agboola**, 2003).

In may 2004 the committee of university librarians of Nigeria universities at its biannual meeting at the university of Ilorin also brainstormed and took a giant step of forming a consortium (NULIC) designed to embrace all university libraries in Nigeria with the prospect of being expanded to include all Research, Polytechnic and Colleges of Education libraries in the near future (**Agboola, Oduwole and Ajegbomogun**, 2006). The objectives of NULIC are;

- Promote resource sharing among member libraries;
- Make current and relevant information available to the university community
- Make the academic resource of each member library available to all others; and
- Establish and maintain links with organization and agencies worldwide.

The establishment of the National Virtual Library Project in 2001 by the Federal Ministry of Education enhanced access to national and international library and information resources, as well as sharing locally available resources with libraries all over the world using digital technology.

In this scheme, Nigeria academic libraries are to contribute their research information which would be placed online for sharing. Other resource sharing projects are the Nigeria periodicals index(NPI) of the NULNU and the National Documentation and library centre for Science and Technology (NADICESY) aimed at providing access to current and retrospective information on science and technology to facilitate research.

The information and communication technology (ICT) has brought innovation in resource sharing. With this innovation most academic libraries in Nigeria now engaged in internal and external networking sharing of resources. Major internet driven resource sharing programme includes; school nets, the national open university services, the teach net by National Commission for colleges of Education, the Poly. net by National Board for Technical Education and the National University Commission.

Expressing dismay at the futile attempted at resource sharing among academic libraries in Nigeria, **Ubogu, Okoh, Alimole** and **Eyitayo** (1992), lamented that all effort are efficient resource sharing in Nigeria seem to have come to naught. Most project lie either on the drawing board or are half completed. Library cooperation exists only informally, based on goodwill of one library to another. It lacks legal support by formal agreement. **Ekoja** and **Orji** (1997), appraised all resource sharing initiatives by CULNU and they affirmed that it is only the Nigeria periodicals index and the Union List of Journals that achieved some measure of success. Other hardly went beyond conception stages before they suffered setback.

PLAN OF ACTION

The following activities should be initiated to promote and 'strengthen resource sharing network among academic libraries in Nigeria

- (a) All academic libraries should establish documentation and information services unit with qualified staff to provide intensified information services like Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), online database, Current Awareness Services (CAS) by computers and reprographic services.
- (b) Considering the huge financial requirement for the development and sustenance of ICT infrastructure the federal ministry of education and the Nigeria library association should engage those at the corridors of power in constructive discussion with the academic institution.
- (c) The real obstacles of resource sharing are not only that of matter and money but the attitudes of fellow librarians and participating members. The library staff should uphold the philosophy of S.R Ranganatha's five laws of library science in this resource sharing phenomena.

(d) All academic libraries in Nigeria should computerized their service. This will enable the libraries to benefit from the rich resource available electronically.

(e) Library staff should be deputed for specialized training programmes (conference/workshop) so that the latest development on the subject would be known and it will help them to serve the users on better times.

(f) Participating libraries should evolve a common code of conduct regarding the collection development and resource sharing. The code of conduct should be applied strictly to ensure that resources sharing are religiously guarded.

(g) Inter-library loans should be accepted as an official and compulsory programme and activity in the academic libraries .Inter library loan specification code should be framed as existed in Western Countries.

(i) Academic libraries should procure more and more materials in an electronic form so as to transform the present traditional library into an electronic one and use available IT to establish resource sharing with other academic libraries for optimum access at reduced cost.

CONCLUSION

The success of the academic programmes in Institutions of higher learning in Nigeria depends on the quality, availability and accessibility of library resources, facilities and services. All the educational commission and committees have stressed for building of the resources to effectively meet the varied information needs of the faculty, researchers and students. However, it was observed that the libraries of the academic institutions of higher learning in Nigeria are often neglected. The resources are also not sufficient to cater to the needs of the clientele .There are several reasons for this situation. Information explosion and accelerated technology, growing inter-disciplinary of subjects, increase in user strength, spiraling cost of publication, shrinking budgetary provision, lack of adequate trained man power etc. are making it difficult and impracticable on the part of the libraries to develop an effective and balanced collection of resources. In these circumstances, academic libraries are forced to confront with the users. To avoid such confrontation, academic libraries have been finding alternative mechanisms. Resource sharing is the only way for librarians to survive as self-sufficiency for any individual library is an impossible task. Resource sharing remains a veritable means of increasing any

academic library information resources tools and personnel without exhausting time and finance. It helps to make resources and tools available in one academic library available and accessible to other libraries without much difficulty. Resource sharing has a lot of advantages which the libraries involved in the consortium enjoy. It saves time; increases library resources; and exposes the library staff to new techniques and skills of practice. Academic libraries in Nigeria should consider and embrace resource sharing for improvement of their services to the satisfaction of their patrons.

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