RESOURCE SHARING ACTIVITIES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES SERVICES: RESULT OFA SURVEY.

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Abstract

Although libraries have along tradition of resource sharing, in the past the results have not been meaningful as regards to having enough to share with others. The pervasive state of academic libraries generates a syndrome of insufficiency, and will continue for as long as the so-deemed libraries prefer to conveniently ignore resource sharing. The paper addresses problem and importance of resource sharing. Survey method using questionnaires for collection of data from the three selected academic libraries was adopted. Findings revealed that resource sharing is practice at a very low level coupled with failure of the selected libraries to embrace information communication technology.

Keywords: Resources sharing inter library cooperation, Library Consortium, academic libraries.

Introduction

It is pertinent to note that no academic library by itself has any hope of being self-sufficient. It is neither possible nor feasible for the academic library irrespective of its size, to be self-reliant in terms of collection. Dougherty and Hughes (1991) observed that libraries and library services were no longer individual university problems and that a collective approach is now absolutely essential. The only way evolved by academic libraries to improve their services to the library user, is by broadening the base of information availability through resource sharing. Sharing of library resources which is an aspect of inter library cooperation means that one library uses the resources of other libraries and vice-versa. As such, a group of Libraries working together in cooperation for a common purpose of mutual benefit can be termed as resource sharing system (Sangal, 1984).

The concept resource sharing among academic libraries in Nigeria has assumed unprecedented importance not because the country is passing through period of austerity measures, but because of the present era of information explosion. Each library is looking for new and better ways to serve new and existing populations using technology. Times are changing however, and the academic library is evolving along with the needs and expectations of its users. Enabled by

technology, the practice of sharing puts virtually every library in the state at everyone's fingertips, and so provides for an equalization of sources and services regardless of community wealth and resources (Joanne, 1999). It is certain that effective resource sharing among academic libraries depends upon the strengths of individual libraries. One weak library cooperating with another weak library cannot promote effective resource sharing. We share our strengths, not our weaknesses. Driven by prevailing circumstances, sharing of resources is the only option left for academic libraries arid librarians.

Studies have shown that this concept was limited to the acquisition and sharing of resources, inter-library loan but advent of information technology and networking technologies have changed the concept of resource sharing and have opened new vistas of resource sharing for effective functioning of the libraries. Resource sharing practice in Nigeria has a number of problems. They include; inadequacy of existing resources, lack of information about them, inadequate security of materials, uncooperative attitudes of the parents bodies, lack of policies, inflation and unstable budgetary allocation and lack of union catalogues (Vervlief 1979, Edoka, 2000, Nwazuoke, 2001 and Ejedafiru, 2003).

Objectives of the Study

The study is aimed at investigating the practice of resource sharing among various

libraries in Nigeria. It is specifically aimed at:

- Determining users awareness of resource sharing arrangement among selected academic libraries.
- Ascertaining beneficiaries of resource sharing services.
- Identifying types of materials mostly shared.
- Challenges associated with resource sharing arrangements

Literature Review Although the concept of resource sharing has been traced back as far as the library at Alexandra, the impulse toward cooperative collection development, in the sense of actual coordinated and collaborative activities, had emerged comparatively recently among libraries of all types in Nigeria. However, studies have shown that librarians on the whole tend to be favorably inclined towards the idea of resource sharing, especially at the academic library level and coupled with the fact that they are publicly funded. Motivation for involvement in resource sharing varies greatly from cost reduction considerations to improving efficiency.

Academic libraries in Nigeria believed in the principle that sharing is a sound practice. Ibrahim (2006) noted that the need for resource sharing stems from three underlying trends of modern society: the growth of all forms of literature, the increasing reliance on information to enable society function: effectively, the inflation in the cost of materials coupled with the increasing availability of technology.

Song (2000) was of the view that "no library can effectively satisfy its users from the resources within its walls". We are living in a time where a library's worth is increasingly being measured by the services it offers in terms of helping clients to access universal information rather than its respective collection. Song (2000) further emphasized that we are living in a time where the level of utilization of information resources has become the yardstick to determine a country's economic advancement and strength. In her contribution, Miambo (2002) asserted, "cooperation between libraries is a universal language spoken indifferent dialects". The mission of the cooperative ventures is to improve library services through cooperation. She emphasized that cooperation, is no longer instrumental for libraries, it is strategic. Today the following elements make cooperation a strategic subject for libraries: globalization of the economy and society-the economic and social changes shaping the so called information society involve the globalization of the activities of all institution including libraries.

There is an increasing tendency toward regional organization and administration of services and this is also occurring in libraries, the increasing complexity of environment calls for the need for specialized knowledge which calls for budgeting for technical expenses as well as the need for internal reorganization and the creation of new services and the need to overcome inertia-isolation and inertia tend to go together and the best antidote may be to know what other libraries do in similar cases and to exchange experiences and information with colleagues from other libraries.

The main goal of every academic library is to pull library materials together in order to give more satisfactory services to its users, by making more information resources available to them. Gang (1980) Ekuoye (2002) and Ejedafiru (2003) agreed that there is no way a single library can satisfy the demands of its users. But when libraries cooperate and make their resources accessible to one and another, we see results. The justification for resource sharing is hinged on the fact that no library, however large, could be completely self-sufficient. In the opt words of Sme thurst (1991),"cooperation can obviously lead to some savings, particularly in expenditure on common materials of marginal interest and it can lead to better use

of scarce resources. But when these questions are asked we should be ready with the firm answer that sharing poverty does not produce wealth". In the light of the above statement .academic libraries in Nigeria have not fully exploited resource sharing considering the problem of inadequate library collections. It would seem that any attempt to promote the sharing of resources among these libraries would be futile, since libraries not able to meet their own needs would not be able to meet the needs of others. Access to information is a fundamental right of all library patrons in Nigeria. Since no individual library has adequate resources to meet its patrons needs, libraries should participate in resource sharing services. It is pertinent to note that these services supplement and greatly expand local collections, remove geographic barriers. Successful resource sharing services in academic libraries depend on the ability to locate, identify and promptly deliver specific items to its patrons.

Research Methods

The research design adopted in this study was the survey method using a questionnaire to collect data. An open and partly closed questionnaire was designed, this will allow for controlled answers as well as free expressions. As Moore (1983) asserted, it will allow the investigation to obtain fairly straight forward, uncomplicated information and wide range of answers. The population of the study comprise of three academic institutions, which are; Delta State University library, University of Benin library and University of Port Harcourt library. The sample of this study include patrons who were using the three academic libraries on the various days of visit. The random sampling technique was used during the (days of visit (3days). A total of 300 copies of questionnaire were retrieved from the three institutions. The questionnaire was designed to elicit data on whether;

- They are aware of the practice of resource sharing in their various libraries
- They have benefited from resource sharing services, they have ever requested for materials the library does not have in stock,
- The library made any attempt to help them in locating their information needs;
- They got satisfactory services in such requests and the type(s) of information materials they normally request for.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of the study are presented below:

Table 1: No. of administered and retrieved Questionnaire

Institutions	Admin	Retrieved	Percentages
Delsu library	100	70	31.53
Uniben library	100	78	35.13
Uniport library	100	74	33.33
Total	300	222	100

Out of 300 copies of questionnaire administered,222 were found useable and used for data analysis.

Table 2: Status of the Respondents

The status of the respondents are shown in the table below;

Institutions	Respondents	Frequency	Percentages
Delsu library	Students	41	18.46
	Staff	24	10.81
	Non staff/students	5	2.25
Uniben library	Students	45	20.27
	Staff	26	11.71
	Non staff/students	7	3.15
Uniport library	Students	48	21.62
	Staff	18	8.10
	Non staff/ students	8	3.60

Table II reveals the status of respondents in the three university Libraries. This reveals that students (134 or 60 35%) constituted the majority of users of the Libraries. Students use the Library to supplement notes given by lecturers, complete class assignment write projects.

Table III: Users awareness of resource sharing arrangement

The table below shows multiple responses of users' awareness of resources sharing arrangement in selected academic libraries.

Sources of awareness	Delsu library		Uniben library		Uniport library	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Librarian/the library	13	5.85	18	8.10	16	7.20
Individual knowledge	49	22.07	46	20.72	40	18.07
Notice board	49	22.07	46	20.72	40	18.07
No awareness	8	3.60	14	6.30	18	8.10

Considering the necessity of library education, respondents were asked whether they have ever been informed of the availability of resource sharing arrangements in their libraries. One hundred and eighty-two (representing 80%) of the respondents are aware of resource sharing facilities, that it should be part and parcel of any library services. However, 135 (representing 60.86%) claimed that they know this from their individual knowledge of the library services. Forty-seven respondents (representing 21.15%) claimed to have gotten this awareness from the librarians/libraries. The other forty respondents (representing 18%) also claimed not to be aware of such phenomenon. The implication of these findings is that librarians have not done enough in the area of user's education.

Table IV: Beneficiary of the Services

The table below shows number of times, respondents have benefitted from resource sharing service

No. of times			Uniben library		Uniport library	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Once	29	13.06	24	10.81	19	8.55
Twice or more	9	4.04	10	4.50	10	4.50
None at all	32	14.41	44	19.81	45	20.27
Total	70		78		74	

As shown in table IV above, though greater percentage of the respondents claimed to be aware of resource sharing services, but have not benefited from the services. One hundred and one (representing 45.47%) of respondents have made use of interlibrary loan services. While one hundred and twenty-one (representing 54.49%) claimed not to have made use of such services.

Table V: Types of materials mostly used by Respondents

Types of Materials	Delsu library		Uniben library		Uniport library	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Books only	39	17.57	41	18.46	40	18.02
Books and journals	18	8.11	20	9.00	18	8.11
Journals only	8	3.60	10	4.50	12	5.41
Others	5	2.25	7	3.15	4	1.80
Total	70		78		74	

Table V shows that greater percentage of the respondents in the three universities use books only (54.05%). And a small percentage of the respondents from the three institutions use books and journals. While 30(13.51%) claimed to be making use of journals only. The implication is that most of the materials in the three universities are mostly textbooks which are mainly for teaching. The periodicals titles which are supposed to be important factors in carrying out research are in short supply. This reveals that these academic libraries are not fully equipped for research.

The university libraries have an important role in making relevant literature available to researchers. Since most of the knowledge required will be found in journals, it is important that librarians provide appropriate and timely information to researchers by ensuring that they have access to relevant literature hence journals which constitute the most important source of information to scientists must be readily made available to them. The information needs of scientists are often met through reading well established scientific journals and secondary bibliography series (French, 1990).

Table VI: Reasons for inability to use resource sharing facilities

Reasons for not using resources sharing facility are shown in the table below

Reasons	Delsu library		Uniben library		Uniport library	
	Frequency	**%**	**Frequency**	**%**	**Frequency**	**%**
Poor communication	8	3.60	5	2.25	6	2.70
Nonchalant attitude of the library staff	4	1.80	4	1.80	3	1.35
Lack of cooperation among academic librarians	5	2.25	5	2.25	4	1.80
Ignorance of resources sharing service	18	8.10	14	6.30	18	8.10
Poor postal system	4	1.80	3	1.35	4	1.80
All the above	36	16.21	39	17.56	39	17.56
Total	75		73		74	

Table VI shows that one hundred and four respondents of the three university libraries noted that all the factors listed above are responsible for the Failures of resource sharing. Fifty claimed to be ignorance and are not even aware of such facilities. The implication of these findings is that a proper education of the users should be put in place. However, twenty three (representing 10.35%) and nineteen (representing 8.55%) cited lack of library automation and poor communication respectively.

Table VII: Reasons for inability to satisfy users information need

The table below presents reasons given for the inability of Libraries to satisfy users information.

Reasons	Delsu library		Uniben library		Uniport library	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Poor financial background of the library	22	9.90	28	12.61	25	11.26
Lack of information materials	26	11.71	31	13.96	32	14.41
Lack of qualified personnel	4	1.80	3	1.35	2	0.9
Poor facilities in the library	18	8.10	16	7.20	15	6.35
Total	70		78		74	

Library, which basically caters for teaching and research, fails to live to expectation. The library is expected to acquire as many publications as possible in the particular fields that are taught in the university curriculum. A total of 89(40.04%) respondents indicated lack of information materials as reasons responsible for the inability of the libraries to satisfy information needs of users: Etim (2006) opined that the increase in the value and demand for information puts pressure on African university libraries to offer more effective services to users.

However, 75(33.77%) of the respondents see poor financial background of the libraries as a reason for the inability of the libraries to satisfy the information needs of the users at all levels. On the whole, university libraries in many African countries have faced a difficult decade, with rapid erosion of finding for books and journals, staffing difficulties, and perhaps a loss of the perception of the library as the centre of academic life and scholarship (Etim, 2006). Forty-nine (22.05%) of the respondents insinuated that poor facilities in the libraries consistently hindered the services of the academic libraries.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Resource sharing is very important to academic libraries in developed and developing countries. Academic libraries in Nigeria experienced under funding, which makes it difficult for them to subscribe to journals and to acquire other information materials. Librarians and information specialists in tertiary institutions must therefore learn to manage scarce resource while arguing for minimum level of stocking, staffing and funding that is required for effective resource sharing for development. Academic libraries in Nigeria cannot remain isolated and independent, they have to depart from their traditional notions of librarianship, developed and nurtured in an era of institutional pride and autonomy.

We have now reached the right moment in the development of librarianship in Nigeria when the needs of our users can be brought together and can be addressed through the medium of technology. Let each academic library in Nigeria share the common burden of being user-oriented institution and gradually build the foundations of international resource sharing cooperation. With their insights and ideas, they can work out a cooperative structure because they are convince that information is power, and that the freer the information, the more powerful its positive impacts.

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