

USE OF COMPETITIVE INTELLIGENCE IN CURRICULUM ENHANCEMENT THROUGH COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Israel Omonigho ANGELA

Albert Ilemobade Library,

Federal University of Technology, Akure, Ondo State

Email: angela.omonigho@gmail.com

Abstract

The paper identified the growing use of competitive intelligence in many organizations thereby emphasizing the need for academic libraries to adopt a similar pattern in its collection development process. The discourse summarized the concept of collection development as the process of planning and building library collection through a series of activities which includes selection, acquisition, and management of information resources. Curriculum is the bedrock of any institution. However, if it is not enhanced by the provision of quality information resources for teaching and research in academic libraries, it may become unpopular among students and researchers. This may cause a reduction in student enrolment rate. It may also rank such institutions low among their counterparts. Therefore, academic libraries which play a pivotal role in curriculum enhancement should engage in strategic planning and collection of useful intelligence required to improve institutional operations. Challenges encountered during collection development process in academic libraries were identified. They include; absence of a feasible policy, staff shortage in libraries, inadequate space for managing library collection and absence of a well-coordinated system for interlibrary cooperation. A workable policy should be formulated to revamp the entire collection development process. More personnel should be employed while professional librarians seek better ways of marketing library resources and services. More importantly, adequate funding for the purchase of both print and electronic resources should be provided to enrich library resources and increase curriculum enhancement in tertiary institutions.

Keywords: *collection development, competitive intelligence, curriculum enhancement, tertiary institutions, academic libraries, clientele.*

Introduction

A firm is regarded as a cohesive organism which learns to adapt or find better ways of doing things in response to its environment (Nthiiri, Gachambi & Kathumi, 2014). A library is no different. The library refers to any designated area where information or information resources are acquired, processed, organized, packaged and disseminated via systematic means to meet information needs of clientele. Libraries in general and academic libraries in particular have one overall objective which centres on the provision of relevant information for constructive use by their patrons. The successful execution of this goal hinges heavily on libraries' ability to acclimatize to changing trends in the world of information technology.

Academic libraries are located within tertiary institutions of learning and, like other organizations are consistently under the obligation to deliver value oriented

services to people within the institutions they serve. They include university administration personnel, faculty members, students and researchers from outside the institution. One very important function of an academic library is to ensure the adequate provision of information resources in curriculums run by tertiary institutions. Curricular activities are an integral part of tertiary programmes. The robustness level of courses offered in tertiary institutions to a large extent influences the enrolment rate of students and the effective running of institutional operations. The ultimate goal of any profit oriented organization is to make gain. Therefore, in a bid to increase and sustain viable programmes in tertiary institutions, institutions of higher learning would need to create enabling environments that will attract patronage of students that is higher than that of their counterparts.

As the environment becomes competitive, strategies to adopt initiatives that will edge out other institutions becomes necessary to develop. This will afford institutions with adequate competitive intelligence the privilege to blaze the trail of administrative and academic excellence for others to follow. The paper therefore explores ways by which curriculums in tertiary institutions can be enhanced through the use of competitive intelligence in collection development activities in academic libraries.

Competitive Intelligence: An Overview

The concept of competitive intelligence takes its root from early years in the Chinese history in a military treatise titled "Art of War" by Sun Tzu (Calof & Wright, 2008) cited in Amiri, Shirkavara, Chalak & Rezaeei (2017). Since then, many perceptions regarding competitive intelligence have abounded as well as its application to businesses and other aspects of human endeavour. An earlier definition of competitive intelligence by Kahanner (1996) cited by Miller (2013) describes competitive intelligence as a systematic and ethical programme for gathering, analyzing and managing information that can affect a company's plans, decisions and operations. Pellissier & Nenzhelele's (2013) view of competitive intelligences takes on more technicality as they describe the concept as "a process or practice that produces and disseminates actionable intelligence by planning ethically and legally collecting, processing and analyzing information from and about the internal and external or competitive environment in order to help decision makers on decision making and to provide a competitive advantage to the enterprise."

Competitive intelligence has become relevant to many organizations especially as it concerns the provision of sustainable competitive advantage. Even among libraries, competitive intelligence is becoming a recognized tool for effective delivery of information resources and services to clientele.

Abolarinwa & Yaya (2015) regard competitive intelligence as an activity related to information science that extracts relevant information from primary and secondary information and communicates such information on a consistent basis and at minimal cost. In the opinion of Uzohue & Yaya (2016), competitive intelligence and information professionals share similar characteristics which permits information professionals to remain relevant in the face of emerging trends in information and

communications technology. The main objective of competitive intelligence involves the gathering of intelligence to influence strategic decisions in an organization (Abolarinwa & Yaya, 2015). They describe competitive intelligence as a continuous integrated process which involves a number of procedures. They include the following;

- Planning and identifying information needed in the competitive environment
- Collection of raw data via legal and ethical means from public sources
- Analyzing data and converting it to intelligence
- Communicating prepared intelligence to decision makers for use

Strategic decision making is the end process of strategic planning. Strategic planning is akin to competitive intelligence because it involves gaining a competitive edge or an improved position in the world of business through the analysis of both internal and external information to ascertain what is within the confines of achievability (Germano & Stretch-Stephen, 2012).

In order to make strategic decisions, managers or members of executive bodies of organizations must be fully assertive regarding the goals they intend to achieve. Strategic planning helps to properly define organizational goals and further illumine how such goals can be achieved.

Competitive Intelligence and Academic Libraries

In a general sense, libraries are non-profit organizations that are established to create and add value to the well-being of their patrons. In more specific terms, academic libraries are expected to conduct strategic planning operations or competitive intelligence exercises in order to achieve organizational effectiveness. However, over time, it has been discovered that most libraries are lagging behind in this regard; libraries poorly engage in competitive intelligence activities. (Germano & Stretch-Stephenson, 2012). In their opinion, these lapses are as result of the absence of a leader-defined vision and lack of objectives that should exist in a competitive environment. This postulation may seem in strong consonance with the submission of Goulding, Graham & Stephen (2012) who argue that many librarians lack understanding of what leadership in librarianship entails and the accompanying skills and competencies needed for success in library leadership roles. Libraries in general and academic libraries in particular may therefore need a re-orientation especially as it concerns the planning and execution of visionary and strategic goals that will keep libraries afloat and relevant in the competitive environment. A major hindrance to effective execution of competitive intelligence activities faced by libraries as stated by Germano & Stretch-Stephenson (2012) is the difficulty in connecting patron attitudes, needs and desires to library services.

Tertiary institutions comprise people from diverse backgrounds with variant perceptions of the type of information they presume they need. And with the enormous amount of information at their disposal, clientele are overwhelmed with an assemblage of choices. The situation becomes dire at such instances if academic libraries lack the professional wherewithal to close the yawning gap between clientele and the exact information resources needed to meet their needs.

As a result, academic libraries may lose their relevance in the competitive arena if students, staff members and researchers access information resources without their input.

Germano & Stretch-Stephenson (2012) believe this is a tardy circumstance that is exacerbated by the absence of dedicated marketing professionals. In their own words: "the lack of professional marketing department including sales professionals in libraries represent a substantial barrier to strategic planning success".

Marketing is an essential part of the competitive intelligence process. It involves the communication of products and services available for consumption or use by customers. Absence of the marketing process creates a vacuum between customers' needs and organization's offer of products and services. Marketing is a functional area that is tasked with the gathering of market research data, conduction of product or service testing, communication with customers through advertising and personal selling and customer service interactions needed to retain or add customers (Burns and Warren, 2008). Most marketing firms are known to generate competitive intelligence reports to increase sales or high patronage. However, in a discourse on the transfer of technology via libraries within universities, it is argued that though most marketing firms provide information for marketing strategic decisions, they may lack knowledge and access to relevant available resources (Dewland & Jackson, 2016). Moreso, free flow or transfer of information and technology will be greatly enhanced with increased cooperation with libraries. Academic libraries need to integrate marketing processes into their strategic planning procedures so that they can efficiently engage their counterparts in the competitive environment.

Collection Development

The concept of collection development concerns the efficient and effective build-up of a library's collection. Haliso & Aina (2012) defines collection development as the process of planning and building a useful and balanced collection of library materials over a period of years, based on an ongoing assessment of information needs of the library's clientele, analysis of usage statistics and demographic projections which are normally restrained by budgetary limitations. Collection development is a dynamic and continuous activity (Patel, 2016) and it involves a number of activities which include selecting information resources, acquiring materials selected, developing plans for sharing resources among libraries, maintaining resources acquired and then weeding and evaluation of the entire library stock (Ojebode, 2009). The rationale behind collection development is to ensure that the overall objective of setting up a library which centres on the provision of relevant resources for meeting clientele's information needs is achieved.

Nwosu & Udo-Anyawu (2015) highlight the following as components germane to the collection development process:

Collective planning: this comprises community analysis, user study and policies guiding the entire collective process.

Collection implementation: relates to selection and acquisition of library materials as well as funds to execute these activities.

Collective evaluation: this involves the methods of ensuring that information resources acquired are relevant in meeting the needs of the users. Acquisition of information resources are largely determined by the reading interest of their clientele. Hence, there is need for a collection development process to ensure and sustain libraries' relevance especially in the face of emerging information technologies.

Collection Development Policy

Collection development policy is the course of action adopted for developing the collection or stock in a library (Patel, 2016). A major function of collection development policy is to provide guidance to staff when selecting and deselecting print and electronic resources for local collection (IFLA, 2001). It is a necessary tool that leads to consistent informed decisions. Collection development policy organizes and guides the processes of acquiring and providing access to information resources. It also highlights how these resources are merged with existing collection and managed till they are presumed to have expired or lost their relevance. Numerous reasons abound for academic libraries to have a collection development policy. Patel (2016) states a few of them, indicating that a policy:

- expresses its relationship with the objectives of the parent organization of the library
- form the basis for strategic planning regarding library collection development
- provide information to assist in budget allocation
- helps to set standards for selection and weeding of information materials
- assists to minimize personal bias during selection and to detect imbalances in the selection criteria

Contents of a viable collection development policy as stated in the International Federal of Library Association (IFLA, 2001) and Institutions' document on acquisition and collection development include the following;

- mission statement of such institution regarding acquisition of information resources.
- characteristics that determine the duration of the development of the collective such as current area of focus as well as retrospective acquisition, types, language and format of information resources
- the particular library policy is meant for as well as the community it serves
- means by which the collection well be assessed
- techniques and process used to gather data for assessing the collections
- type, duration periods and methods to adopt during weeding exercises

Major approaches to defining and assessing library collection according to Anderson (1996) include the conspectus approach and the narrative approach. This refers to an overview or summary of a collection's strength and establishes an

arrangement by subject, classification scheme or both. The narrative approach presents the type of collection contained in the library and their categories in a narrative form.

Curriculum Enhancement

Curricular activities are a core part of any educational institution's programme. They form the bedrock on which an institution stands. Curriculum may be referred to as the totality of an area of study that is meant to be imparted to its intended users (Ekoja & Odu, 2016). Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2017) defines curriculum as courses offered by an educational institution or a set of courses constituting an area of specialization. The Glossary of Education Reform (2015) describes curriculum as knowledge and skills students are expected to learn which includes the learning standards or objectives they are expected to meet; the units and lessons that teachers teach; the assignments and projects given to students; the books, materials, videos, presentations and recordings used in a course and the tests, assessments and other methods used to evaluate student learning. This definition subtly reveals the role of specialised institutions such as libraries in supporting curricular activities. As examples of projects intended to enlighten and improve on the well-being of learners, curriculums need to be sustained and enhanced so that student enrolment level in tertiary institutions can be increased.

Curriculum enhancement involves teachers' alterations of curriculum (Hall, Vue, Koga & Silva, 2004). Oftentimes, teachers enhance curriculum with additions of instructional strategies. According to Hall et al (2004), enhancement in curriculum is done to evaluate and teach adequate background knowledge in preparation for new tasks. While enhancing the curriculum, instructors tend to introduce a variety of instructional materials and procedures to meet the needs of students. At this juncture, the library is very key in the provision of information resources required to successfully carry out these tasks. It therefore becomes imperative for librarians to be equipped with adequate skills to select, acquire, process and provide relevant resources required for curriculum enhancement in tertiary institutions.

Competitive Intelligence, Collection Development and Curriculum Enhancement

Academic libraries are designed to support the educational teaching and research needs of parent institutions they serve. If this must be the case, then information resources acquired in such libraries must reflect the academic requirements embedded in the curriculum designed by the tertiary institutions. In technical terms, acquisition of information is guided by a collection development process which involves a prior activity known as selection. Selection is done in strict compliance with conditions embedded in the collection development policy. Selection of information materials is done on the basis of the perceived usefulness of the users. (Nwosu & Udo-Anyawu, 2015). While all resources may be useful, not all are relevant to users. Patrons of libraries in tertiary institutions mainly use information for teaching and research. Therefore, information resources in

academic libraries must be related to courses offered by the institutions. Selection requires some measure of skill and meticulousness and it is very germane to the collection development process. The deselection or wrong selection or information resources in a library collection defeats the entire purpose of an academic library. A more devastating effect is the fear that the library will suffer a great dearth of resources that would have enriched the curriculum of tertiary institutions. This may translate to poor quality in academic delivery and low student rate. However, such consequences may be averted if specialized knowledge on relevant resources is gathered to aid in the selection process.

As earlier emphasized, competitive intelligence has helped to enhance timely delivery of services in many organisations including the libraries. Proper selection during the collection development process in academic libraries can be improved through the gathering of relevant intelligence. Among the similarities between competitive intelligence and libraries, Japheth, Achonna & Osisanwo (2014) indicate that through ethical means, both of them acquire, manage and use information resources to support organizational decisions. Sources considered as ethical means through which information resources may be selected include; book reviews in journals, newspapers, publishers' catalogues, book vendors' stock lists, visits to bookshops and exhibitions, clientele's suggestions and subject expertise of librarians (Edoka, 2000). At other instances, librarians may explore online book vendors or other internet sources for e-books or latest information resources on courses offered in their parent institutions. This is to ensure a balanced collection of resources in different kinds of format.

Encouraging suggestions from clientele also help in the selection process. Library users can provide useful intelligence especially if they are aware of the existence of relevant information materials in other sources or academic libraries. Academic libraries may need to adopt all available and reasonable measures to provide resources related to tertiary institutions' curriculum while ensuring copyright compliance among its users.

Acquisition is the second task in the collection development process. It involves the physical gathering of relevant information resources into the library. After being acquired, information resources are processed and put in designated sections in the library for clientele's use. Acquisition of library resources is considered pivotal in resource development in libraries. However, Okoro (2006) cited by Nwosu & Udo-Anyawu (2015) laments that libraries particularly those located in the eastern part of Nigeria are poorly funded. Many Nigerian libraries have had to rely on grants and government monetary interventions such as Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) to purchase information materials and equipment.

Weeding is an important aspect of collection development process. It involves the removal of documents or materials that are no longer serviceable from the library (Patel, 2016). Weeding helps to evaluate library collection; detecting its strengths and weaknesses. Expectations at the end of weeding exercises include more space creation and easier access to information materials. However, for Nigerian

libraries, this may not be the case as many libraries can hardly replace weeded materials on shelves owing to shortage of funds (Bantai, 2002). Yet, the importance of weeding for this reason cannot be undermined. Library collections should be viable and reflect the curriculums run by tertiary institutions they belong. This is believed will better project the institution's image and subsequently increase locally generated revenue through student enrolment in such institutions.

Challenges of Collection Development

Patel (2016) believes that collective development is one of the most challenging processes in the library profession. The reason for this may be as a result of painstaking tasks involved in ensuring that relevant and appropriate information resources are what is acquired. Also, librarians' constant sense of accountability towards clientele regarding rendering quality service keeps them on ready alert for any signs of failure or setbacks. In spite of these, some studies still show certain lapses during the collection development process in libraries. For instance, in a study conducted by Nwosu & Udo-Anyawu (2015) on the performance level of collection development function in five academic libraries in Imo State, it was discovered that inadequate book vote owing to shortage of funds was a major problem of collection development. Similar problem was identified in some other studies (Oyebode, 2009 and Okoro, 2006) as a major setback in the collection development of libraries. Minihan (2014) specifically stated the challenge of the rising cost of serials as this has prevented librarians from purchasing adequate numbers of serial publications on Hong Kong libraries. The challenge of poor funding has caused a decline in the purchase of new information materials and compelled many libraries to rely on gifts and donations.

Other factors that militate against effective collection development process in libraries include the following:

- ❖ lack of comprehensive policy
- ❖ inadequate staff in libraries
- ❖ absence of an organized system of interlibrary cooperation
- ❖ shortage of physical space for proper management of information materials
- ❖ lack of coordinating departments for all aspects of collection development
- ❖ poor access to online resources as supplements for physical library collection

The Way Forward

The collection development process is sine qua non for the effective delivery of library services. For this reason, more effort needs to be made to enhance collection development activities especially as it affects the curriculums of tertiary institutions. First, the formulation of feasible collection development policy that will properly define the mission statement of academic libraries and their objectives is needed. More library personnel should be employed to manage collections. Librarians also need to be more proactive by adopting appropriate marketing strategies that project the image and services of libraries within tertiary institutions. Though accountable to their individual institutions, academic libraries should develop a consortium through which they can share knowledge on resources

available in their libraries. This will be a convenient means of gathering intelligence for beefing up their individual collections.

More space should be allocated to academic libraries especially during weeding exercises. Some weeded materials may still be relevant and should be properly preserved until management decisions regarding their disposal are made. The issue of funding has always been the bane of poor collection development process in academic libraries. Money allocation for the purchase of both print and electronic information resources is always inadequate. Nonetheless, more effort should be made to secure fund to acquire adequate resources for academic libraries. Fund security helps to facilitate the collection development process and to further enrich the library's collection.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Organizations including tertiary institutions are quickly coming to terms with the need to adopt competitive intelligence in their daily operations in order to remain relevant in the competitive environment. The discourse emphasized the place of academic libraries in enhancing curricular activities in tertiary institutions through the formulation of a functional collection development policy.

The collection development process plays a pivotal role in the efficient and effective delivery of library services. As in other firms where strategic planning is essential for quality production and services, academic libraries need to gather useful intelligence especially during the selection process of information resources so as to appropriately and adequately provide resources relevant to their clientele. The absence of proper planning and collection of useful intelligence will leave library patrons at the mercy of the tedious and tenuous use of online resources. The reviewed literature identified challenges in the collection development process. They included; absence of a workable policy, staff shortage in libraries, inadequate space for managing library collection and absence of a well-coordinated system for interlibrary cooperation.

Suggested means to overcome these problems include first, the formulation of a workable policy, recruitment of more personnel, reworking of the library's image through aggressive marketing, inter-library cooperation and adequate funding for the purchase of both print and electronic resources. When information resources in academic libraries are updated and attested to be relevant, curriculums of tertiary institutions will be enriched and viable enough to increase student enrolment. Institutions with such curriculums will also be able to contend with their counterparts in a competitive environment.

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