

**DIGITAL INFORMATION RESOURCE COLLABORATION AMONG  
ACADEMIC LIBRARIES OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN  
NORTHWEST NIGERIA: CHALLENGES**

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**Abstract**

*This study examined the challenges to digital information resource collaboration among academic libraries in federal universities in Northwest Nigeria through a survey. One first generation university was selected (Ahmadu Bello University), and two second generation universities (Usmanu Danfodiyyo University, Sokoto and Bayero University Kano) for the study.*

*Quantitative methodology and survey design was used to collect primary data from the respondents in the university libraries studied. Data was collected from a total population of 67 respondents using self-develop questionnaire and analysed using frequency count and percentage. The study revealed that challenges to digital information resources collaboration among academic libraries in universities in Northwest Nigeria are funding, lack of will by the academic libraries to explore digital information resource collaboration as option to address shortage of information resources for library users, absence of implementable digital information resource collaboration policy among the academic libraries and non-cooperative attitude of academic libraries. The following recommendations were made: that academic libraries management in universities in Northwest Nigeria should initiate quick process to forming a common implementable digital information resources collaboration policy that will promote understanding and cooperation; there is need for digital information resources collaboration in science, soft and hard skill, health, research, education, technology and there is need to foster professional network and funding for sustainable digital information resources collaboration project among academic libraries in universities in Northwest Nigeria*

**Keywords:** Digital Information Resources, Academic Libraries, Collaboration, Challenges

### **Introduction**

The increasing challenge of maintaining balanced and robust library information resources collection since the early 80's have had deleterious effects on the existence and institutional performance of academic libraries in Nigeria. Collective efforts by scholars and library practitioners to cushion and create an avenue for reliable, stable and readily supply of not only the shortage in information resources collection but in manpower in technical information sharing, training and collaboration. To set this research on the right bearing, the whole effort in this paper is targeted at conducting documentary analysis to identify the level of implementation, challenges and success recorded in maintaining digital information resource collaboration among federal government owned universities in Northwest Nigeria. Collaboration in this context is an initiation premised on obvious inadequacy or shortage in library information resources and the need to leverage collective manpower knowledge, technical information, information resource, economic advantage and network to tackle it as existential challenge and achieve a common goal of steady access to resources.

Digital information resources are a part of the seamless mainstay of major academic libraries in Federal universities in Northwest Nigeria. They are resources characterised by their digital appearance, mode of availability, flexibility, simultaneous access and permutative appeal. They are basically ebooks, ejournals and other information that exist in edatabases, CD-ROM, e-magazines, online databases, e-theses and dissertations and Internet resources (Uwandu, 2022). The need for collaboration in Academic Libraries particularly, in Federal universities has also been necessitated by the geometric publication of literature catalysed by information technology further making the academic library diversify its collection to meet the insatiable information need and preference of users as well contend with the increase in the cost of acquisition, subscription and training by collapsing and cascading less pressing priorities and bridging gaps that exist in information collection putting the already meager allocation on information resource overwhelmed scale. No doubt, digital information resource collaboration is one of the panaceas to building bridges, support weak academic libraries, increase relevance to users and ensure smooth academic study among students and staff and to also build a reliable network for guaranteed access to information resources.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Digital information resource collaboration is born out of the need for libraries to address and find alternatives to shortage of technical and information resources through the initiation and promotion of sustainable access to information by all particularly by academic libraries of federal universities in Northwest Nigeria. This idea ensures the libraries have alternative ways to maintain access to library information resources that they cannot afford due to paucity of fund and other essential needs of the library. There is strength in digital collaboration, libraries are able to streamline and automate many services, thus saving time and money. The digital environment also creates new opportunities for services that benefit the users. Today, after long years of promoting this lofty idea of information resources collaboration that is no doubt enhanced by the ICT, little is reported about its implementation, challenges and successes achieved by academic libraries in federal universities in the Northwest Nigeria. There is argument that the open resource initiative has overshadowed it and almost made it an abstract. This study therefore sought to find out about digital information resource collaboration among academic libraries in federal universities in Northwest Nigeria through a survey.

### **Research Question**

1. What are the challenges to digital information resource collaboration among academic libraries in federal universities in Northwest Nigeria?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Digital Information Resources**

A digital resource is defined as a resource that requires access to the computer or any electronic product that provides a collection of data, be it text referring to full-text databases, electronic journals, image collections, other multimedia and media-based products, numerical, graphic or temporal values, such as a commercially available title that was published for the purpose of commercialization (Dakshata, 2020). These can be delivered on CD ROM, on tape, over the Internet, etc. In recent years, a number of related techniques and standards have been developed that allow you to create and distribute documents digitally. A digital resource is any material created through digital means or translated from an analog (paper) state to a digital one.

According to Kenchakkanavar, (2014) defined digital information resources as a resources which requires computer access or any electronic product that delivers a collection of data, be it referring to full text bases, electronic journals, image collections, other multimedia products and numerical, graphical or time based, as a commercially available title that has been published with an

aim to being marketed. These may be delivered on CD ROM, on tape, via internet and so on.

Shariful, (2012), is of the view that Digital Information Resources (DIRs) are those resources that deal with both born electronic and digitized materials which can be either accessible from library's in-house database or from the world-wide-web. The born electronic materials includes: e-books, e-journal, e-newspaper, e-magazine, e-projects, e-thesis, dissertations, e-reports, website, www-resources and other related materials which can be considered necessary by the users, researchers, information professionals or even by the library management itself. On the other hand, digitalized materials mean converting the materials from other formats into digital format.

### **Digital Information Resources Collaboration in Academic Libraries in the University**

Applicable for collaboration information resources will enhance documents, manpower, services, space and equipment's. Reduces cost of information resources such as (books and subscribing periodicals), high cost of new technology for information processing and dissemination are some of the fundamentals factors which require information resource collaboration among the academic libraries.

The concept of digital information resource collaboration refers to mutual agreement between academic libraries for share their resources for providing better services to their patrons. Such resources may include: digital document collection, technical facilities and mechanical support among participating libraries (Mubofu and Chaula 2021).

“Nlo library is an island.” Given the current academic libraries and the kinds of changes outlined above, academic libraries can no longer afford to develop their services independently. Many of the changes taking place are large in scale, complex and difficult to navigate. Partnerships are crucial for an academic library to successfully meet the needs of its clients and support the aims and objectives of its university. The library needs to work closely with client groups so that services are relevant, forge partnerships with other university professionals to provide seamless services, and develop innovative services with other local, regional or national organizations and universities to help deliver effective services and institutional efficiencies.

Zhixian and Thompson, (2015), Cited in Ezekiel (2022) states that, case study of collaboration in China Library and information infrastructure, includes areas such as education and information dissemination, information building,

information resources exchange, information resources loaning, intellect support digital inclusion, Library digital collections, information infrastructure problem solving with regards with regards to both traditional and modern information resources according to study of university Libraries collaboration.

With the Technological developments in the libraries today exist in an academic digital library have become it of easy. The term “digital libraries” encompasses the infrastructure, resources, and channels of transmission based on Internet-related technologies. The digital environment is characterized by information and communication technology (ICT)-based content and transfer of information.

Collaboration among academic digital libraries provides many opportunities to librarians and users for access to wider ranges of information resources. For more information is available to users. Library staff is able to use technology to locate the information more effectively and efficiently. Collaboration in digital libraries also enables the library to streamline and automate many services, thus saving time and money. The digital environment also creates new opportunities for services that benefit the users.

According to Atkinson, (2018), Collaboration can be particularly effective where there are clear links to key institutional strategies and drivers. Alignment with national strategies and priorities can also help to gain buy-in at an institutional level. Collaboration provides an opportunity to deal with areas of activity that are too large for any stakeholder to deal with individually and collaboration allows participants to take a wider perspective than they normally can, and to think institutionally, nationally or globally while acting locally.

However, collaborative process allows for wider and deeper input from people with a variety of perspectives, expertise and experience. This helps to develop a more complete picture of the area and a richer service for users. Collaboration can provide efficiency savings, streamline work processes, and free up staff time for more value-added activities, collaboration can help to change the role of the library in the university and move it beyond the traditional client service model and more joined-up service delivery is developed. The points of contact for users are minimized through the development of integrated services, single-user interfaces, single input of data, etc. Atkinson, (2018).

Such key collaborative behaviors are further corroborated by Wang (2011: 5-6), who states that true integration of Information resources relies on:

- Shared understanding: partners need to have a shared understanding of the purpose and importance of curricular integration of information literacy and the outcomes thereof;

- Shared knowledge: partners share specialized knowledge and provide support from different areas of expertise. These include subject knowledge, information resources, referencing etc.;
- Joint dialogue with respect and tolerance: partners need to interact, negotiate and communicate to achieve the same goals with mutual respect and tolerance;
- Joint efforts with trust and support: partners need to work together to complete the agreed tasks with a high level of trust and support. The curricular integration of information literacy can involve intensive tasks including, the designing of assignments, developing teaching resources and support material, developing assessment methods, and marking information literacy work. All partners need to make contributions and commitment to carry out the agreed tasks in the integration of information literacy.

Jesse, (2017), Stated significant as followed:

- It promotes efficiency, effective delivery of services and better access to international, database and encourages improved productivity among the collaborating libraries.
- It encourages patronage, as the information accessed and used by clients is up-to-date an enriches teaching learning and the information professionals.

### **Challenges to Implementation of DIRC by Academic Libraries in the University**

There will be a number of challenges to overcome if the collaboration is to be successful. There can be significant differences in culture and working practice between the participants. Achieving the necessary cultural change can take time. Some staff may be resistant to change and not see the benefits of collaboration, there can be a real or perceived loss of professional or institutional identity, and staff may be uncomfortable or uncertain working outside their normal professional boundaries and comfort zones and feel isolated from their normal working colleagues. Staff involved in the collaboration may not have sufficient autonomy in allocating their time and effort, and, if they retain some of their normal responsibilities, there may be competing priorities.

At institution level, there may be difficulties associated with participants having different strategic goals, structures and priorities, with consequent difficulties in establishing a common approach or specification acceptable to all. It can be difficult to maintain the balance between protecting the policies and priorities of the participants while leveraging the opportunities that come from shared approaches. For example, there may be a need to give up local control of systems and services.

The literature reviewed has extensively dwelt aspect of collaboration digital information resources. The conceptual framework is a collaboration of academic libraries and challenges to Implementation of the collaborations among academic libraries and library networking which deals with the interconnection of libraries so that the participating libraries can share information and resources effectively and Collaboration being a new construct in the Digital Library Reference Model proposed by the DELOS Network of Excellence on Digital Libraries. The related study reviewed covered the period of 2006 up-till-date none of them has addressed the collaboration among academic libraries in the north west geo-political zone of Nigeria. Therefore, there is a knowledge gap in this area which this present study will address or fill up.

### Research Methodology

Quantitative methodology and survey design was used to collect primary data from the respondents in the university libraries studied. Data was collected from a total population of 67 respondents using self-develop questionnaire. The data collected was analysed using frequency count and simple percentage. The population of the study is presented in table 1.

**Table 1: Population of the Study**

S/N	Academic Libraries in Northwest Nigeria	University	Survey
1	Kashim Ibrahim Library	Ahmadu Bello University	42
2	Abdullahi Fodiyyo Library Complex	Usmanu Danfodiyyo University, Sokoto	11
3	Bayero University Main Library	Bayero University Kano	14
Total			67

The entire population was used hence there was no sample size for the study.

### Result and Discussion

The data collected were analysed using simple frequency count, mean and standard deviation. The response rate revealed that out of 67 copies of questionnaire administered, only 56(83.6%) copies were successfully retrieved and found valid and used for further analysis.

**Question 1:** What are the challenges to digital information resource collaboration among academic libraries in federal universities in Northwest Nigeria?

**Table 2: Challenges to Digital Information Resource Collaboration**

S/n	Challenges to Digital Information Resource Collaboration Among Academic Libraries in Federal universities in Northwest Nigeria	Frequency	Percentage (%)
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1	Lack of will by the academic libraries to explore digital information resource collaboration as option to address shortage of information resources for library users	54	80.6
2	Absence of implementable digital information resource collaboration policy among the academic libraries	52	77.6
3	Absence ICT infrastructure to host digital information resources collaboration	43	64.2
4	The challenge of Assembling digital information resources collaboration team	27	40.3
5	Funding challenge	56	83.6
6	The priority of parent organisation	18	26.9
7	Meeting and sustaining the requirement of Intellectual property protection	47	70.1
8.	The availability of OER made library management relaxed about digital collaboration	23	34.3
9.	Non-cooperative attitude of academic libraries	50	74.6

Table 1 elucidate the challenges to digital information resources collaboration by academic libraries in universities in Northwest Nigeria some of the major challenges are funding 56(83.6%) followed by Lack of will by the academic libraries to explore digital information resource collaboration as option to address shortage of information resources for library users 54(80.6%), Absence of implementable digital information resource collaboration policy among the academic libraries 52(77.6%) and non-cooperative attitude of academic libraries 50(74.6%). Other significant challenges are meeting and sustaining the requirement of Intellectual property protection 47(70.1%) and absence ICT infrastructure to host digital information resources collaboration 43(64.2%).

### Discussion of Findings

The challenges to digital information resources collaboration by academic libraries in universities in Northwest Nigeria are funding, lack of will by the academic libraries to explore digital information resource collaboration as option to address shortage of information resources for library users, absence of implementable digital information resource collaboration policy among the academic libraries and non-cooperative attitude of academic libraries. Other significant challenges are meeting and sustaining the requirement of Intellectual property protection and absence ICT infrastructure to host digital information resources collaboration. It is believed that successful digital information resources collaboration starts with adequate provisions that address likely challenges to its take-off. This is the major set to digital collaboration among libraries in Nigeria.



Funding as the common challenge, must be taken seriously by ensuring that there is sustainable sources to funding the project. In this line of suggestion, foundations and organisation should be convincingly required to support in addition to budget allocation, intervention, grant and fees charged from students. In a related study, Igbo, Ibegbulam, Asogwa, and Imo (2022) reported that there is a lack of formal policy to support the establishment of digital information services, lack of platform for online reference service, poor staff skills in the application of digital resources and services, poor funding of university libraries and frequent interruption of electricity supply and users' lack of skills in the use of online resources.

### **Conclusion**

Digital information resource collaboration among academic libraries is one of the surest many other ways to addressing shortage in not only print information resource in our academic libraries but to providing alternative and virtual option to accessing increased information resources by users. The impediments should be addressed in order to actualize sustainable collaboration among academic libraries in universities in northwest Nigeria. Addressing this impediment is in line with global call for creation of conducive environment for access to digital information resources. Therefore, academic libraries have the fundamental obligation to promote access to quality information resources and address challenges to workable digital information resources collaboration.

### **Recommendations**

1. There is need to outsource funding in addition to existing ones for sustainable digital information resources collaboration project, management of the academic libraries in universities in Northwest Nigeria should reignite the will to promoting and sustaining reliable digital information resources collaboration among themselves, place quality and implementable policy to seal their mutual contract and should periodically meet to share knowledge.

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