CHAPTER ONE

CONSORTIA RESOURCE SHARING: A TOOL FOR COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT IN POLYTECHNIC LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

Abstract

Knowledge and information are growing in a geometric progression today. Hence, Polytechnic libraries, as institutions managing and giving access to such knowledge resources, cannot be undermined. The acquisition of knowledge published in different formats is in a constant condition of decrease due to the financial constraints and budget cuts in polytechnic libraries. This has placed them on crossroads in providing efficient library services and meeting collection development needs. Based on this, the study examines consortia resource sharing as a veritable tool for collection development in polytechnic libraries in Nigeria. The relevance of library consortia for collection development in meeting users' information needs; factors to be considered for a successful library consortium; and, the challenges facing library consortia and participating members, are equally considered. With library consortia, member libraries are certain of an enriched collection of resources, thereby creating wider access to information resources, saving cost, encouraging better library services, etc. The study reveals that strong leadership, assured funds, and consortium team negotiation amongst others are needed for a successful library consortium. Unfortunately, the low level of technology penetration, resistance to change, and lack of funds are challenges therein. Therefore, the researchers conclude that resources sharing through the use of consortium would increase many libraries collections if they decide to participate. Recommendations made include planning, preparation and the decision to belong to a consortium, advocacy for fair and balanced copyright laws that support libraries in providing access to knowledge, libraries making an effort to address funding problems by finding alternative means of raising funds for joining a consortium, managers of consortia making efforts to encourage the creation of union catalogue and training, and consultative services providing for participating libraries to facilitate its use.

Keywords: Collection development, library consortia, polytechnic libraries, resources sharing, consortium team.

Introduction

In this era of information explosion, there has been an outburst of several information resources in different formats. Libraries are therefore faced with the challenge of acquiring a host of information resources, both prints and electronics, to meet the growing information needs of their 21st-century users. Meeting users' needs would require developing library resources collections through the co-operation of other libraries and agencies since no individual library can boast of self-sufficiency. This co-operation is termed Library Consortium. A library's involvement in more than one is termed "consortia". A consortium of libraries is well known for the sharing of resources all over the world. A **consortium** could be described as a group of organisations who have agreed to come together to fulfil a combined objective that usefully requires cooperation, sharing of resources and the need to have a clear mutual goal in order to ensure their success (Scepanski, 2002). The term Consortia the plural form of Consortium. It can be said to be a cooperative arrangement among groups or institutions. Hirshon (1999) defines **library consortia** as a generic term to indicate any group of libraries that are working together towards a common goal, whether to expand cooperation or traditional library services (such as collection development) or

electronic information services." It is now used perhaps too broadly and encompasses everything from formal legal entitles to information groups that come together solely to achieve better pricing for purchasing electronic information. As such, library consortia are the agreement by libraries having common interests and needs to come together to achieve a common goal that is beyond what an individual library could achieve on its own. According to Dong and Zou (2009), a library consortium is an association of libraries established by formal agreement, usually for the purpose of improving services through resource sharing among its members. In view of this, Yernagula and Kelkar (2011) and Chauchan, Chand and Kaur (2011) define *library consortium* as a formal association or a joint venture of homogeneous libraries that operate on mutual approved terms to share the resources among members and to achieve, mutually, common objectives.

Examples of library consortia are Fenway library consortium, libraries of middle sex, Mernmack Valley library consortium, Novanet, NULIB, etc. Some of these consortiums are online. Library consortia vary in their types, goals, structure, membership, and funding, which may be a formal or informal agreement between libraries based on common principles. For example, a consortium may be based on library type academic, medical or public. A regional consortium may be based on a geographical principle. A state wide or nation-wide consortium "may incorporate all its libraries; government-funded and those in private institutions (Shachaf, 2003.94). While consortia is an umbrella body housing the interested libraries (an engine room), resource sharing, on the other hand, is nothing but the sharing of library resources by certain participating libraries, among themselves, on the basis of the principle of co-operation. This is applicable in the sharing of documents, manpower, services, space, facilities and equipment, e-resources, etc. (Muthu, 2013). Theresa and Kumari (2014) note that: resource sharing is a concept that includes many cooperative activities between libraries and other information centers. Besides, with an ever-increasing growth in knowledge and information explosion, it has become difficult for libraries to acquire all needful information materials. This is no wonder as the exponential growth in the production of knowledge has made it more and more impossible for an individual polytechnic library to purchase all the relevant information resources. Therefore, polytechnic libraries have to rely more on consortia for the development of their collections. It is against this background that the researchers examine consortia resource sharing as a tool for collection development in polytechnic libraries in Nigeria.

Why Library Consortia for Collection Development?

The emergence of library consortia would be a very promising development for polytechnic libraries in Nigeria, particularly in this era of paucity of funds, with the increased knowledge of published and unpublished materials from other libraries (Chaterjee, 2002). Many libraries are joining library consortia for richer collection

development in their libraries. Library collection development is the process of planning and acquiring a balanced collection of library materials in diverse formats. It is the process of meeting the information needs of library users. With the ever-increasing growth of knowledge, information explosion and information needs of the library users, it becomes necessary for libraries to be part of a consortium. The consortium is needed for polytechnic libraries because of information explosion, diversity of users, financial crunch, the impossibility of self-sufficiency, inadequate manpower, amongst others.

It is in the light of this that Obaru (2013) cites in Idiegbeyan-Ose, Esse and Adewole-Odeshi (2015) states that resources sharing or library consortia is a vital practice in every library (especially academic libraries), as a result of the fact that no library can boast of self-sufficiency. Also, knowledge has continued to grow over the years due to the high rate at which researches are conducted and their findings published for the purpose of educating people. In fact, knowledge is growing at such a geometric progression rate that libraries will be flooded with resources if they have means of acquiring them.

The Relevance of Library Consortia to Collection Development

The relevance of library consortia to collection development in libraries cannot be overemphasised. These include:

1. **Wider Access to information Resources:** With a consortium, a library can have wider access to information resources especially in electronic formats. Idiegbeyan-Ose, Esse & Adewole-Odeshi (2015) opine that consortia purchasing offers the single library the opportunity to get access to more journals than they currently have subscriptions to; thus eliminating the continuous cancellation operations. Besides, a consortium, with the collective strength of resources of various institutions available to it, is in a better position to resolve the problems of managing, organising and archiving the electronic resources (Bedi & Sharma, 2008).

2. **Reduces Cost:** A major portion (75-80 %) of the library budget of all libraries is being spent on journal subscriptions. Consortia subscriptions will solve this problem to a large extent (Satija & Kair, 2009). Consortia play a key role in the negotiation and licensing of an electronic resource, thereby providing significant savings to libraries when the cost of those acquisitions shared may have been unaffordable. No doubt; library consortia reduce the cost of collection development in libraries and, at the same time, increases library collections at affordable prices. Library consortia play a major role indeed in the acquisition of electronic materials, with a considerable reduction in cost.

3. **Saves & Manages Human Resources:** With consortia subscriptions, for example, digital resources are made available to a large group of readers from a central place. This no doubt, reduces the need for more staff. In yet another vein, the

consortium provides opportunities for staff members to develop new skills and interact with professionals that they, under normal circumstances, would not have had the opportunity to meet. Some consortia provide training and professional development for members.

4. **Enhances Better Library Services:** The most important advantage of library consortia would be their enhanced ability to serve society by giving better library services. Library consortia help libraries adapt to the rapidly changing information landscape and also enrich the collection, thereby serving users better.

5. **Facilitates Resource Sharing:** The benefits of library consortia cannot be discussed without making reference to resource sharing. In fact, library consortia are aimed at resource sharing. According to Burke (2010), library consortia play a major role in developing collaborative models of print resource sharing. All forms of sharing take place through library consortia sharing the archiving resources, sharing electronic resources, sharing staff expertise, sharing catalogues, and even sharing risk.

6. **Maintenance of Standards:** Furthermore, library consortia promote new standards that are helping libraries better manage their usage statistics with the project counter. They play an important role as promoters of new paradigms. Consortia excel at promoting collaboration. In fact, the most effective library consortia will move beyond buying clubs for electronic resources to providing significant value in other ways (Burke, 2010).

Factors to be considered for a Successful Library Consortium

For a successful library consortium to be in place and sustained, certain considerations must be followed. Wiser (2011) states that strong leadership is needed for a successful library consortium to grow. Libraries, like all organisations, tend to concentrate on their internal needs above other concerns. It often takes a cheerleader personality in an identifiable advocate to encourage institutions to focus their energies outside their own campus communities. A leader who effectively knows the individuals in a given library community can best serve as a catalyst for the ongoing process of growing a successful library consortium. Furthermore, a successful library consortium needs to be timely. Wiser (2011) posits that a successful library consortium will be one that can do something valuable and unique in a timely fashion. Such a consortium will have little difficulty demonstrating its value. Islam and Mezbah-ul-Islan (2008) the factors necessary for the effective and successful functioning of a library consortium for collection development as follows:

1. **Headship/coordinator:** Selecting a coordinating agency to deal on behalf of the entire group of participants, executing and monitoring the activities.

2. **Assured sources of funds** to meet their subscription cost.

3. **Publishers/vendor or aggregators:** Identifying and negotiating the potential publishers/vendors/aggregators to provide access under the consortia purchase.

4. **Legal issues** involved in contracts and usage of materials within the consortium.
5. **Agreements** interested libraries be identified and agree on common terms and conditions.
6. **The infrastructure** necessary for electronic access to resources should be identified.
7. **Sustained access**: issues related to backup and archival of a database must be addressed.
8. **Documentation and training** of staff should be considered and done. Training of staff is very important due to the rapidly changing nature of the technology.

If all these are put into consideration, the library consortium, no doubt, would be very successful. However, it should be noted that a library consortium cannot function effectively without proper planning (long-term and short term), a rich technology base (especially for the acquisition of electronic resources) of the consortium, and a good financial base.

Disadvantages of Library Consortia for Libraries

The advent and development of library consortia today have helped libraries in solving several challenges. Nevertheless, there are still some disadvantages of library consortia. Some of the disadvantages are:

1. **Lack of Archiving and Backup:** Most library consortia do not have archives and backs up, and so when a hard drive crashes or important files of a consortium gets lost or even a virus infects files, all the information or files cannot be recovered. This way, very vital information relating to members of a consortium or management activities may be lost.
2. **Copyright Problems:** A number of copyright issues arise in the library, amounting to a lack of effective collection development. A consortium is able to speak with one voice to vendors, policy makers, and other stakeholders. Libraries are important stakeholders in copyright issues. Although copyright protection is automatic as a matter of common law or civil rights, there are still some problems that emerge in library consortium. For instance, restrictive copyright laws create legal barriers to accessing resources for education, research, and personal development. This can have significant consequences for libraries and consortium in developing and transitioning countries that have limited funds to purchase copyright-protected materials.
3. **Requires Initial Capital and Cost of Administration:** Goodman (2000) asserts that there is a debate, and that debate is intense with different positions. He notes, some doubt if there is a real economic advantage in using consortia to obtain lower prices for electronic resources. This is because there is a need for high capital for licenses and information communication technologies. Also, the cost of meetings and other administrative activities has become a major disadvantage of

members of library consortia. No wonder Peters (2003, 111) asserts that meetings are very expensive.

4. **Delay in Decision Making:** There is often a time delay in library consortia as one library may not respond or act on issues timely. This delay is definitely not good for libraries in building their collections. Information dissemination ought to be timely but consortia collaboration may take too long. When libraries are delayed in developing the collection, all in the name of "library consortia", the result can be very frustrating. More so, since consortia are collections of several members, there is a tendency that decision making would be slow.

5. Finally, library consortia may require the training of staff in handling electronic documents and, sometimes, the absence of a printed copy of journals.

Challenges of effective Collection Development through Library Consortia

The place of library consortia for collection development in libraries cannot be over-emphasized. As earlier mentioned, library consortia enhance resource sharing, reduces the cost of purchasing electronic resources, encourages wider access to information materials, amongst others. Sadly, some challenges deny libraries from enjoying the full benefits of library consortia. These challenges are:

1. **Low Level of Technology Penetration:** The impact of information technology is obviously a massive one. The advent of the internet has changed the entire world and the information sector in particular (Van Borm & Sokolova, 2004). For the successful functioning of a library consortium for collection development, a strong information communication technology base is required. However, the level of technology penetration in Nigerian polytechnic libraries is still relatively low.

2. **Financial Constraints:** Consortium and collection development requires money, but the source of funding for many libraries in Nigeria is very discouraging. The funding for a successful consortia and collection development is not forthcoming. Since entering consortia requires initial investments in licenses and information technology and with most libraries allocating nearly 100% of their funds to the day-to-day operations and services at the beginning of the year—it means that little, if any, space for additional fund decisions during the course of the year can be made. This makes it difficult for many libraries, amongst other things, to join consortia.

3. **Resistance to Change:** Many libraries in Nigeria are not entering consortia agreements especially where publishers impose payments for off-consortia delivery of documents, either in electronic or paper format. Perhaps for fear of change, some librarians are scared of the challenges of entering into new library cooperation in the form of consortia.

4. **Interrupted Online Access:** Many libraries may rely on consortia for the procurement of their information resources, especially electronic resources. However, when there are network problems leading to interrupted online access,

participating libraries would find it difficult to access online subscription resources. This makes online consortia nearly unfeasible.

5. **Membership Fee:** Bansode (2007) explains this problem when he said that organising bodies may charge excessive contribution fees, as per their will, and may hamper the very objective of the consortium. Besides, there are chances of manipulation of funds. This can be discouraging for libraries to participate.

6. **Lack of Complete Automation:** A consortium without sharing the resources of the participating libraries is limited to online subscriptions made available from the gateway portal. Many libraries jump into consortia without considering its automation status. With the availability of internet connectivity, this will allow such libraries to access the resources of other member libraries, though their resource remains inaccessible until complete automation (Hangsing, Saref & Nath, 2003).

7. Other problems are lack of resources, absence of the culture of interlibrary lending, absence of union catalogue for libraries, leadership problems, corruption, etc.

Conclusion

Library consortia for collection development, indeed, are all about resource sharing and increasing access to a variety of information materials (especially electronic resources) across the board. Joining a consortium for collection development will, amongst other benefits mentioned earlier, enhance the image and prestige of the library and solve the problem of space in the library. Though there are some disadvantages of consortia for collection development in libraries, the advantages of library consortia outweigh the disadvantages. Definitely, the use of consortium for sharing would increase geometrically as many libraries get to realize the significance of consortium for effective and efficient collection development.

Recommendations

The recommendations being made here to ameliorate the challenges of library consortia for effective collection development are in two dimensions-for participating libraries and for consortia administrators. They are as follows:

1. There should be preparation and planning on the part of polytechnic librarians to enter into a consortium. Therefore, a formal agreement of all polytechnic libraries in Nigeria to establish a consortium should be considered a matter of urgency.

2. There should be advocacy for a fair and balanced copyright law that supports libraries in providing access to knowledge.

3. Libraries may seek to address their funding problems by finding alternative means of raising funds for joining a consortium.

4. Consortia administrators should make efforts to encourage the creation of a union catalogue of participating libraries.

5. Library consortia should also provide training and consultative services for participating libraries.

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