

## CHAPTER FIVE

### BENEFITS OF INFORMATION RESOURCES SHARING IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES LIBRARIES IN DIGITAL AGE

#### **Abstract**

*The Information Revolution has made Libraries around the globe to adopt new philosophies and technologies for service delivery, provision of relevant, current and adequate information and also reduce the cost of information. University libraries have realized that no matter how they are sufficiently funded, it is difficult to acquire all the materials needed by their clientele. This article examines the prospects and hindrances of Information Resources Sharing in University libraries. It discusses the concept of information resources sharing, resources sharing in the digital age, rationale for resources sharing,*

*benefits and challenges of resource sharing. It drew its conclusions and recommendations based on the numerous literature reviewed which include funding and maintenance of library resources, organizing staff training on the benefits of resource sharing and how it could be done in the digital age, there is need for constant power supply, provision of ICT resources to enable sharing of information and creating an environment that enables resource sharing to thrive.*

**Keywords:** Resource information sharing, Library, University libraries, Digital era

#### **Introduction**

We live in an information based world where the future of mankind depends on the increasing roles information centers are playing in all spheres of life. We live in a world of information wildfire which is often expressed by the statement that knowledge in every field doubles in a period of about ten years. This is supported by the evidence in the growth of information in the form of books, resource sharing as periodicals, thesis and other research publications (Burman, 2007). The library is central to provision of information resources in the community where it is situated. For instance, the university community needs its library to provide information resources that are essential for university education which makes the library employs information resource sharing as a means of achieving standard collections. Oladokun (2014) observed that "for a library to effectively meet the information needs of its varied users, it must take advantage of the benefits of networking". This will allow a library to offer a world of limitless resources". The focus has shifted towards creating cooperation and connections between people and developing the need for exchange and sharing of resources among universities libraries and other information centers. Resource sharing is a mutual agreement to exchange resources. Muddand Havens (2008) claimed that shortages are an inevitable consequence of social and economic instability and argued that resource sharing and cooperation can resolve insufficient supplies. The responsibility of university libraries is to ensure that the use of its information resources are maximized to benefit its clienteles, hence the need for information resource sharing. In Nigerian university libraries, Information resource sharing has huge prospects and peculiarities of the university environment and there is need for colossal capital to standardize research and teaching information resource provision viz-a-viz community development. Each library gives its own materials to other participating libraries and also receives same from others.

### **Concept of Information Resource Sharing**

The digital age has brought profound change to university libraries. Numerous outside entities with which we work according to agencies, publishers, other libraries, library organizations and consortia, information technology departments on campus and in university education, to name a few are also dealing with and reacting to the impact of digital technology from their perspectives. University libraries cannot operate in a vacuum in responding to change, particularly if we want to master the future we envision rather than drift outside the service provision desk. Resource sharing has been defined by so many authors. Mohammed (2012) described it as a working arrangement where two or more libraries make their stock available to their respective users and as well as many include the collective sharing of their respective users within their limited financial resources. This emphasis is to provide more developed services to their users within their limited financial resources. Reitz (2004) explained that resources sharing is the activity resulting from an agreement, formal and informal among group of libraries(usually consortium or network) to share collections, data, facilities, personnel etc for the benefit of the users and to reduce the expense of collection development. Oyelude (2004) identified the types of sharing as interlibrary loans, joint acquisition, central cataloguing, exchange of library materials, computerized cataloguing schemes, awareness services and joint storage of materials. Odin (2001) quoted in Rahman, Awuhe & Ojobo (2015) stated that resource sharing, library networking and library cooperation are used interchangeably in the digital age to mean sharing of resources of a library with users of other libraries. It is the process whereby the resources of a group of network libraries are made available to the sum total of the persons entitled to use any of those libraries.

Muthu (2013) described Library cooperation as an old concept a form of resource sharing. Hitherto, libraries practices interlibrary loan as a means of resource sharing. Interlibrary loan in a traditional library is severely affected by barriers of information and communication technology such as apathy lending libraries, distance, language, time, etc. A computerized interlibrary loan or Resource sharing overcomes these limitations and requires that the cooperating libraries come together in these two areas.

- a. Developing the collection on shared basis
- b. Developing services for exploiting such collection

According to Geronimo & Aragon(2005) quoting Silva(2002) "due to problems like cost of acquisition, of bibliographic processing and storage of documents and the astonishing grow of information produced, resource sharing can, besides a solution to daily problems, optimize library as a service provider to the users. Ejedafiru (2011) reveals that 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 towards coupled with the fact that they are publicly funded. Miambo (2002) asserted "cooperation between libraries is a universal language spoken in different dialects". The



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. According to Aina (2013) Resource sharing is seen as fuel to participating libraries in the following ways. Online indexes, electronic books and texts, electronic journals, electronic catalogues, reference sources, statistical sources, sound recordings, image databases and educational games

### **Resource Sharing in the Digital Age**

In the world of information technology and globalization, resource sharing is fast becoming the norm among libraries as seeks to contribute its quota to the world information resources. The advent of ICT has not only revolutionized the process of resource sharing but has also brought fundamental transformation of libraries services from traditional approaches to modern approaches(Aina,2013).With advances in information and communication technology and collaboration of libraries through interlibrary loan system as well as formation of consortium has become a global facility. The application of ICT in libraries has broadened the scope of librarianship and conferred new roles on libraries. Emorjorho (2014) noted that the accelerated adoption and utilization of information and communication technology (ICT) has resulted in effective sharing of information and knowledge resources. Reitz (2004) described a network as a group of physically discrete computers inter-connected to allow resources to be shared and data exchanged, usually by means of telecommunication links and client/server architecture in order facilitate efficient resource sharing. British Library Website (2007) argued that there are various reasons why libraries embark on the digitalization of their materials. Digitalization makes library resources available electronically thereby providing a wider access to its collections. In networked campuses, users can access the library's digitized resources from their offices and hostels even if the library is physically closed. Also, several users can access the same resource at the same time.

Digitalization offers a way of preserving aging materials, which could have otherwise gone out of use. Academic libraries are not just physical or structure building anymore. They are vast collections of online resources that users can access from campuses, offices, cyber cafes, anywhere and everywhere in the world. They are independent, stand alone collections. Their holdings are independent with those of partners' libraries in order to bring the broadest possible range of materials to share, often overlapping pool of users. Hawkins(2004) observes that knowledge and information have become the most important currency for productivity, competitiveness and increased wealth and prosperity in this era. Trostinikov (1970) has rightly pointed out that rapid expansion of a mass of diversified information is occurring which has received the name "Information Explosion". As a result, the need has arisen for scientific approach to information. Ibrahim (2008) notes that the outcomes of ICT in libraries include

improved quality of information in terms of accuracy, level of details, timeliness and increasing efficiency through the sharing of common database either in the same library or externally. To promote Resources sharing in the digital age, the following steps are to be followed

- a. Important libraries, information centers and institutions get their catalogues and bibliographies prepared in machine readable form to provide computer aided information services to users and promoting automation of the functions in their libraries such as cataloguing, circulation, preparation of bibliographies, union catalogues, etc.
- b. To promote sharing of resources among libraries by developing and disseminating information and by offering computerized services to users.
- c. To optimize information resources utilization through shared cataloguing, interlibrary loan services, catalogue production, collection development and avoiding duplication in acquisition to the extent possible.
- d. Encourage cooperation among libraries, documentation centers and information centers so that pooled resources can augment weaker resources centers.
- e. The promotion of non-bibliographic databases
- f. Anglo-American Cataloguing Rule<sup>2</sup> and RDA should be used as the code for cataloguing. It will help in creation of standard records.
- g. All serials should be published in electronic formats, either routine or CD-ROM.
- h. The network should provide technical assistance to assist libraries in the creation of bibliographic databases.
- i. Most of the abstracting and indexing services have cumulated the entries forming into databases which can be searched online.

### **Rationale for Information Resources Sharing**

The growth in number and use of information and mode of documentation has created many problems for libraries. Self-sufficiency in libraries is not possible at all in such a state of affairs. Libraries cannot dream of acquiring all literature published worldwide individually, but users have the right to ask for it. Thus, libraries have to cooperate to share their resources so that every demand for documents is not only from the library's own collection but from the collections of other libraries too. Osman (2006) stated that the importance of resource sharing in libraries cannot be overemphasized. It is indeed the need to allow libraries and their users to access very wide variety of resources as well as other libraries. Malumfashi (1986) in Rahman, *et al* (2015) identified some variables at play that call librarians to resort to information networking in libraries as thus:

- Proliferation in the literature output. The increase in the volume of printed materials has been occurring at a fantastic speed after the Second World War especially in science and technology. This tremendous increase could perhaps **attribute to the scientific and technological breakthrough worldwide. At such a**



fast rated of information, it is difficult for any library, however resourceful to acquire all types of materials that will make it self sufficient.

- Steady increase in the cost of materials. Reading materials especially books and journals in science and technology are expensive for libraries to acquire. Nigeria university libraries are no exception in this regard. Therefore, cooperation with a view a view to share resources becomes inevitable.
- Limited financial resources. Libraries budgets have been on a continuous decrease as a result of inflationary trends in publishing and governments are yet recognize the relevance of library to nation building.
- Unfavorable foreign exchange situation of Nigeria currency (the Naira)also necessitates resource sharing.
- The need for increased bibliographical access both intellectual and physical to information resources in the universe of documentary resources, so that the resources of participating libraries will be made available to each other thereby increasing their chances of using a larger databases of information resources.

Muthu (2013) conceptualized the need for information resource sharing as follows:

- Information explosion and no library is self sufficient.
- Language barrier and limitation in fund.
- Diversity in users' need.
- Increase in user population and quality of library services.
- Inflation and acquisition, universal bibliographic control.
- Growth and Knowledge in different subjects.
- Rapid increase of literature and growth of publication, cost of publications.
- Increasing trends of new born subjects and specializations.
- Increase in the number of members of user community, teachers, scholars and students in universities.
- Lack of environment to make use available computer and communication technology for efficient and production use in libraries.

### **Benefits of Resource Sharing**

The benefits of resources sharing cannot be overemphasized in libraries and information centres. To underscore its importance, the International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) in 2002 made it one of its professional priorities. The following are the advantages of resource sharing in university libraries as outlined by Muthu (2013).

- a. An comprehensive collections is possible
- b. Quality of services is enhanced
- c. Reduction in the cost of information services
- d. Avoidance of duplication of non-core collection development among participating libraries

- e. Promotion of best practices
- f. Facilitation of the use of common library system
- g. Implementation of staff skills development programmes

### **Challenges of Resource Sharing in University Libraries**

Resources sharing are an important phenomenon in University libraries. This is as a result of information explosion that is evident in the world and problem of limited funds allocated to libraries especially in developing and under developed countries. This has made acquisition information resources very difficult. Library is a service providing institution and meeting the needs of their users is at the center of these goals hence the need to rely on resource sharing. It is disheartening to discover that despite the unlimited benefits accrued from resources sharing, only limited libraries have been able to embrace it in totality.

Anasi (2012) observed that factors hindering effective digital resource sharing include inadequate funding, a dearth of skilled librarians, power outages, an absence of web-accessible OPACs, uneven development of libraries and slow progress of library automation. Nwalo (2006) asserts that the most failed projects on the adoption of resource sharing activities are as a result of money strategies. Fostering cooperation among libraries in Nigeria has failed because important steps are not taken while the libraries lack faith in the proposals. Expatiate on this quotation as there is no proof on the money strategies and the proposals. In Ejedafiru's (2011) opinion, university libraries in Nigeria have not fully exploited resources sharing considering the problem of inadequate library collections. It would seem that any attempt to promote the sharing of resources among these libraries be futile, since libraries are not able to meet their own needs would not be able to meet the needs of others. This statement needs proof.

### **Conclusion**

The digital era has ushered massive benefits for Information resource sharing in university libraries and these have impacted the intellectual development of both the user community, which now have new, adequate, relevant and up to date information resources and information services. These benefits as gathered from diverse literature reviewed confirmed information resource sharing and cooperation as an important tool to library development and standard service provision in the digital era. There is however the need for university libraries to brace up and adopt information resource sharing in totality and take advantage of numerous information and communication technology resources made available in this digital era in order to boost their relevance and that of their collections as well as promoting the library image. It is of great importance to know that library users are like Oliver twist, they always want more, libraries should be geared to rise up to the occasion.



## Recommendations

In lieu of the challenges mentioned above, the following recommendations are made for university libraries that are yet to embrace information resource sharing and those involved partially.

- a. Funding and maintenance of library resources
- b. Organizing staff training on the benefits of resource sharing and how it could be done in the digital age
- c. There is need for constant power supply
- d. Provision of ICT resources to enable sharing of information.
- e. Creating an environment that enables resource sharing to thrive

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