CHAPTER SEVEN

RESOURCE SHARING IN ACADEMIC LIBRARY SERVICES

Abstract
Resource sharing is nothing but sharing of library resources by certain participating libraries among themselves on the basis of the principles of co-operation. This is applicable in the sharing of documents, manpower, services, space, and equipment. The paper addresses the problems and the importance of resource sharing.

Keywords: Resource sharing, Academic libraries, library services.

Introduction

No library, however big it may be, is able to satisfy all the needs of its clientele due to various constraints. It is because of this phenomenon that the concept of resource sharing has been developed. Initially, the term used for resource sharing activities was *library cooperation*. Though cooperation theoretically could embrace almost all library activities, it was confined initially to Inter-library loan of library documents. However, with the advent of ICT and its application in library activities, new opportunities opened up for greater cooperation among libraries. At the global level internet and at the national and local level, several library networks came in vogue and databases were created for information sharing. In recent years, the availability of information resources in digital or electronic medium has further facilitated the exchange of information resources among academic libraries, thus creating a favourable condition for increased resource sharing.

Academic libraries have functional roles within their respective operational environments which make resource-sharing inevitable. In the organizational environment within the immediate parent body of the institutions, the library has the primary role to provide materials to enhance information needs of the established body, update library resources to reflect and update changes, provide a conducive reading environment for research and development by providing ICT facilities to improve and complement existing resources; and, ensure that library personnel are retrained and skilled in the utilization of ICT facilities to academic library services. Additionally, academic libraries provide specialized information and documentation services to their clientele. These services are evolving and increasing daily both in context and concept and therefore, provide challenges to academic libraries, information users, etc. The application of information and communication technologies has made the traditional function of services rendered by academic libraries more complex and has made information control, management, and dissemination more challenging. Consequently, academic libraries in Nigeria and other developing nations, with the economic realities in their operational environments, cannot effectively acquire all relevant materials needed to render adequate information services to their users. Academic libraries,

therefore, need to embrace the new frontiers provided by electronic and internet information resources through networking. Resource-sharing through networking and consortia building is empirically the option that will enhance information provision in meeting the needs of various users and redeem the academic libraries and librarians from obsolescence and redundancy in the new information order. The resource sharing among academic libraries in Nigeria has assumed unprecedented importance not because the country is passing through a 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 with the help of 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 places 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. Going 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 resource inter-library loans. But the advent of information technology and networking technologies have changed the concept of resource sharing and have opened new vistas of resource sharing for the 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 parent bodies, lack of policies, inflation and unstable budgetary allocation, and lack of union catalogue (Vervlief, 1979, Edoka, 2000, Nwazuoke, 2001 and Ejedafiru, 2003).

Resource-Sharing from early Approaches to the Digital Age
The concept of resource sharing has been traced back as far as the library of Alexanda. However, the impulse toward cooperative collection development, in the sense of actual coordinated and collaborative activities, emerged quite recently among libraries of all types in Nigeria. Nonetheless, the librarians, on the whole, tend to be favourably inclined towards the idea of resource sharing, especially at the academic library level, coupled with the fact that they are publicly funded. The motivation for involvement in resource sharing varies greatly from cost reduction considerations to efficiency improvement. The American Library Association (1983) defines *resource-sharing* as a term covering a variety of organizations and activities by a group of libraries, jointly engaged for the purpose of improving services and or cutting down costs. Resource-sharing may be established by informal or formal agreements or by contact, and it may operate locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally. The resource-sharing may be collections,

bibliographic data, personnel or planning activities. Miambo (2002) asserted, "Cooperation between libraries is a universal language spoken in different 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: the globalization of the economy and society; the economic and social changes shaping the "information society" which involves the globalization of the activities of all institutions including libraries. Resource-sharing has been a long-time traditional and cooperative function among libraries as an important means of improving the services offered to library and information users. Early cooperation mostly featured as:

- Bibliographic information: access-sharing of bibliographic information of other libraries by means of National Union Catalogue (NUC) that lists the holdings of participating libraries especially among Federal Universities in Nigeria. The National Bibliography of Nigeria (NBN) also lists books published by Nigerians about Nigeria.
- There is also the traditional interlibrary loan whereby library materials are requested and provided for following agreements among the participating libraries.
- Cooperative acquisition: a joint venture by a group of libraries for the purpose of building wide collection resources to draw from.

The phenomenal growth in computers and information technology networks to process and enhance information generation and dissemination has greatly enhanced and revolutionized resource-sharing. These are exemplified in the following ways among others:

Online Databases: The earliest digital resource sharing among libraries is the Online Computer Library Centre (OCLC). It grew from a regional cooperative network in the state of Ohio, the United States of America to a national network of over 23,000 libraries and information centres in sixty-three (63) countries and territories. The OCLC maintains not only the largest computer and telecommunication centre in the world but also has the world's largest database of bibliographic records and location of information. The OCLC database online union catalogue currently consists of over 35 million bibliographic records, covering all the subject areas in 370 languages and in the following formats: books serials, sound recording, visual materials, map archives, music scores, manuscripts and computer files (Usman, 2006). Similarly, the Library of Congress (LC), Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) provides vast database information for users across the globe. Other modern approaches and technologies of resource-sharing include:

Internet: The Internet is a global network connecting millions of computers and databases. The internet enables resource sharing among academic libraries, information centres, and other libraries in the world irrespective of geographical location.

Information on the latest books, articles, conference proceedings, seminar and workshops papers are accessible on the internet.

Electronic Mail: This is an internet facility very useful for resource-sharing among persons, groups or institutions. Information or document can be posted electronically to one another through e-mail addresses. Indexes and abstracts of information can be sent as attachments via e-mail boxes.

Digital Library: This is an organized collection of digital objects, texts, images, and audio-visuals for resource-sharing. They support multiple metadata formats, and full text and natural language searching in different fields of knowledge such as education, arts and science, health, environment, law and governance, etc. Digital libraries offer users the opportunity of improved and wider access to information, new forms of access, improved information sharing, and presentation. They can be accessed via the internet or purchased as CDROMS.

Teleconference and Video Conferencing: These are multimedia approaches to information discussion, transmission, and sharing of ideas from person to person, or groups and institutions. Through the application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), the exchange of voices and video images is simultaneously connected such that discussions can take place between persons or groups across wide geopolitical areas without meeting physically. Weblogs (blogs) are websites for information exchange arranged chronologically by date and category.

Listerv, Newsgroup, and Usenet: These are public access networks for group discussions on specific topics. They use the internet as an access point for information dissemination. Topical issues are discussed; messages and information are stored on electronic bulletin boards and posted to members via their e-mail addresses.

Why resource sharing?

Allen Kent, Bhargava (1986) has suggested that "the success and survival of big libraries will depend on how much and to what extent libraries co-operative with each other in future".

- The increasing cost of document and tremendous growth of literature.
- Declining library budget and reduced operational cost of libraries.
- Technological solutions and users needing satisfaction.
- Optimum utilization of existing records.

The goal of resource sharing is to provide convenient access to information in whatever form, manner and location, at the most minimal cost possible. Resource sharing via network is targeted to achieve the following basic goals:

- Computerize union service and maximize user satisfaction.
- Share catalogue, circulation, and inter-library loan services.
- Minimize cost and time in reaching a destination.
- Link with other automated library systems and services.
- *Share database services such as abstracting, indexing and full-text services.*

Ways, Means and Methods

a) Inter-library loan and cooperative cataloguing.

b) Co-operative storage and reference; reprographic service.

c) Documentation centre.

d) Union list of Serials and bibliographies.

Objectives of Resource Sharing

Allen Kent, Bhargava (1986) stated the objectives of resource sharing networks in the following words: "Library user should have access to more materials or services providing level service at less cost, increased service at level cost, or much more service at less cost".

i) Sharing of the burden of purchasing materials and processing the materials.

ii) Sharing of services and human expertise.

iii) To extend the accessibility of resources.

iv) To diminish costs and to promote the exploitation of resources.

v) To avoid duplication and save finances.

vi) To increase the availability of resources, and promote the full utilization of resources.

The Need for Resource Sharing

The need for resource-sharing, according to Usman (2006), stems from the underlying trends of modern society. These are enumerated as follows:

- Information explosion because no library is self-sufficient.
- Language barrier and limitation in funds.
- Diversity in users need.
- Increase in user population and quality of library service.
- Inflation and acquisition; universal bibliographic control.
- Growth of knowledge in different subjects.
- The rapid increase of literature, and the growth of publication and its costs.
- Increase in the number of members of user community teachers, scholars, and students in universities.
- Lack of the right environment to make use of available computer and communication technology efficiently in libraries.

Essential Factors affecting Resource-Sharing

The major factors that affect the Resource-sharing of libraries are:

- Availability of computerized data-bases and communication facilities (computer, telephone, satellite communication, reprography, fax, e-mail, etc.).

- Standardization of library organizational practice and the availability of financial resources.
- Efficiency in the governance of network and basic agreement.
- The cost involved in computer networks and skilled manpower.
- Psychology and cost of publications; loss of autonomy.
- Lack of functional websites: resource-sharing in the digital age requires life and current websites of the partnering libraries and institutions. Most websites in Nigeria are static and not uploaded currently. This state of affairs hinders resource-sharing efforts.
- Inadequate Planning: Resource sharing plans may fail in the early stages due to improper and inadequate planning. The failure of most Nigerian network initiatives is associated with planning problems.
- Lack of Commitment to Partnership Agreement: Resource sharing is hampered by the lack of commitment to resource-sharing agreements. A common memorandum of agreement signed and respected by the participating libraries is essential to ensure the success of a resource sharing venture.

Areas for Co-Operation and Resource Sharing

- Co-operative acquisition.
- Co-operation in technical processing of books.
- Inter-library loan at various levels e.g. local, regions state, national and international levels.
- Co-operative storage centres and union catalogues.
- Documentation centres and procurement.
- Centralized acquisition of periodicals.
- Sharing of staff and regional centres.

Components of Resource Sharing

Muthu, M. (2013) points out the five components of resource sharing resources, directories, communications, users and management networks.

a) Depending on the native or resource sharing activity, the resources component may be an existing collection of books, journals, special collections, and non-book materials.

b) The directories component consists of the index or detailed listing of the resource component for library network users.

c) The communication component consists of the link among the participating libraries as modes in the network.

d) The user component of a library network varies according to the nature of the resource sharing activity.

e) The fifth component "network" will be provided by an administrative that carries out four basic functions.

At least five network components may be identified in the process of resource sharing. They are resources documentary, manpower and technology, management, and users. It requires special skills to run the processes involved in networking successfully.

Requirements for Resource Sharing

Every library is required to have computers, electronic data-base, and connectivity of data communication networks to enact resource sharing. A computerized database of bibliographical records of library materials is to be developed to provide a broad perspective about various libraries in the network. Other than hardware and software, the following facts should be taken into consideration to make resource-sharing effective and successful. They are:

i)   Willingness and commitment to share.
ii)   Planning and preparation.
iii)   Policy guidelines, firm acceptance, and technical compatibility.
iv)   Trained manpower, proper monitoring and feedback.
v)   Ensure proper mechanism e.g. transport, couriers, network, and other communication facilities.
vi)   Do not look for immediate benefits. Endeavour to involve all those concerned.
vii)   Frequent meetings reliability and review.

Advantages of Resource Sharing

-   Resource sharing satisfies the fourth law of library science.
-   Resource sharing is very economical and helps to save the library space.
-   Standardization in classification and cataloguing is made possible.
-   Resource sharing avoids duplication of documents and work.
-   It acquires library materials and shareholdings.
-   It provides researchers with an increased number of research materials.
-   It avoids duplicate purchases and ensures the collection of special material and services.
-   Establishes efficient communication systems.
-   Develops an information marketing mechanism through cooperation and control of the quality of collections.

Criticisms of Resource Sharing

-   If all libraries depend on resource sharing, none will have books to lend.
-   If the co-operative acquisition doesn't operate well, serious gaps in the collection of a library will surface.
-   Without sophisticated technology, resource sharing would have very limited value.
-   Cost consideration may not permit resource sharing.
-   The reaction of the publishing trade, if their sale gets reduced might be bad.
-   Large libraries have to share a greater burden of "lender" rather than "borrower" which is not beneficial to them.

Steps to Promote Resource Sharing Through Network

As we have seen, networking of libraries is essential for the sharing of library resources; it should be promoted at local, regional, national and international levels. The following steps are to be taken to promote resource sharing through networks:

- Important libraries, information centres, and institutions get their catalogues and bibliographies prepared in machine-readable form to provide computer-aided information services to users and promote automation of the functions in their libraries such as cataloguing, circulation, preparation of bibliographies, union catalogue, etc.
- To promote the sharing of resource among the libraries in Nigeria by developing and disseminating information and offering computerized services to the users.
- To optimize information resource utilization through shared cataloguing, interlibrary loan services, catalogue production, collection development and the avoidance of duplication in acquisition, as much as possible.
- Encourage cooperation among libraries, documentation and information centres so that pooled resources can augment weaker resource centres.
- The promotion of non-bibliographic databases in Nigeria, especially by the National Informatics centre has enabled institutions to perfect computer and networking technology.
- In-house functions like acquisition, cataloguing, classification, serial control, circulation, SDI, current awareness services, etc.—which are library operations— should be supported by the network. The libraries should use the data in the central port for that purpose.
- The participating libraries should follow the rules and regulations of the network and be willing to create bibliographic records according to standards laid down.
- Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR–2) should be used as the code for cataloguing. It will help in the creation of standard records.
- Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) should be used as a guide for creating subject descriptors. Other thesauri available on specialized subjects could also be used whenever needed in specialized libraries.
- The network should provide technical assistance to participating libraries in the creation of bibliographic databases.
- A panel of experts should be maintained for providing assistance to libraries. Also, a central host machine should be installed for creating a union catalogue, combining catalogues of all participating libraries.
- The network should promote inter-library service, and sharing of foreign periodicals should be attempted. As for as possible, foreign periodicals should be

attempted. In addition, foreign exchange should be saved on avoidable duplication titles. A courier service should be established to support the sharing of resources.

- All serials should also be published in electronic format and made available, either as an outline or CD-ROM.
- Most of the abstracting and indexing services have cumulated the entries forming into databases that can be searched online.

Responsibilities for Information Resource Sharing

1. Creation of virtual digital library covering all the e-information resources available in member libraries by the networking of those libraries.
2. Compilation of bibliographical and/or full-text database of the holdings of the member libraries, both print, and non-print.
3. Sharing of information resources, both traditional and digital, of member libraries through network or document delivery service as the case may be.
4. Digitization of valuable and rare collections of member libraries available in printed format. Plus, the provision of access to such materials to members of all the participating libraries.
5. Supporting member libraries in setting up institutional repositories, e-print archives, electronic theses collection, etc.
6. Developing common interface to catalogues, databases, and e-collection by creating portals.
7. Creating interoperability among the member systems, databases, and services.
8. Balanced collection development and negotiation of group pricing.
9. Establishing a standardized resource sharing system, preparing the union catalogue among participating libraries, and creating databases of resources among them.
10. Usage of web resources for each other and document/electronic media delivery services.
11. Strengthened communication system.
12. Sharing professional expertise and conducting of training programme(s).
13. Library co-operation and co-ordination with contractual obligations for each participant.
14. Sharing the storage facilities, thereby minimizing expenditure on space.
15. Assisting member libraries in creating information technology infrastructure and ; joint preservation and archiving activities for print and digital materials.
16. Initiating and supporting research projects of common interest, and collectively promoting, marketing and publicizing the library services.

Recommendations

In recognition of the diverse challenges that hinder effective resource sharing in Nigeria, the following recommendations are made as a way out:

- There is a great need for proper funding of academic libraries for effective resource sharing. The parent body should see the library as the hallmark of the institution and also understand that the benefits accruing from resource sharing can only be enhanced if enough funds are made available for the purchase of the facilities and the resources that are needed for exchange.

- Apart from that, academic libraries can intensify efforts towards in-house generation of funds. They can also liaise with international donor agencies for sponsorship in the development of ICT in their libraries as an income generating drive. Such strategies include reprographic services, lamination, and printing. They can also purchase bindery facilities and bind materials belonging to staff and students for a fee.

- There should be a review of the curriculum used for the teaching of Library and Information science in tertiary institutions. Practical and theoretical courses on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) should be included.

- Training and retraining sessions should be organized on a regular basis for all categories of staff involved in digital resource sharing. The success of the operations of ICT facilities used in sharing depends on the ability of the staff involved to carry out the required implementations. The training among other things should cover the techniques needed to input data on the computer, surf information from the internet, and use different telecommunication facilities to exchange information.

- The National Library of Nigeria and the Nigeria Library Association (NLA) should be involved in maintaining standards in resource sharing. They should ensure that cooperating libraries update their catalogue and send them for inclusion in the national union catalogue.

- They should also ensure that libraries acquire ICT tools for effective library operations and resource sharing.

- Maintenance, efficiency and the life span of computers hinge on the availability of electricity. There is, therefore, the need for standard stand by generators to serve the computers and other facilities in times of power outage.

- Practicing Librarians should also be encouraged to imbibe the need for the use of computers and the acquisition of skills needed to operate the computer in every aspect of their jobs.

Conclusion

With the explosion of knowledge and the constraints on financial resources, resource sharing has emerged as an important necessity. Moreover, the problems of space, standardization, professional development of the staff, challenges posed by new technologies, and a drastic cut in the library budgets, have aggravated the problems of present-day librarianship. The era of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is an important one in the history of librarianship. It has brought to bear the digitization

of resources; thus, making digital exchange necessary. Through this, documents are liberated from the constraints of traditional access methods. The 21st century is an age that lays emphasis, not on the availability of materials, but on the accessibility of available materials. All hands must, therefore, be on deck to ensure that library resources are digitally shared.

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