

Resource Sharing: An Indispensable Tool for Resource Development in Academic Libraries in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The issue of library Cooperation/Resource sharing has become central in the daily activities of libraries operations all over the world. This is because of the technological advancement in science and human resources quest for information. Similarly, the phenomenal growth development and changes in the library operation coupled with literacy in computer and telecommunication makes the concept "library cooperation" relevant at this time, this is because human resources must be developed to cope with the challenges of information explosion. The paper attempts to examine the definition of (lie concept vis-a-ves its relevance and short-comings-drawn instances from both developed and developing nations. The aims and objectives as well as the benefits to be accrued to each of the participating libraries were also discussed.

Keywords:

Library, Cooperative/Resource Sharing, challenges and Information Technology

1. INTRODUCTION:

The success of any type of library depends on the extent to which it can Satisfy' the needs of its users. And to do this effectively, libraries must in one way or the other be involved in what is called 'Resource sharing, the idea of library cooperation came into being in the recognition that no library can possess the resources to satisfy the needs of its users, even if it is well funded. Another reason may not be unconnected with foreign exchange in the case of developing nations, the dearth of current publications as well as economic policy of Nigeria as example for this reason, therefore, it become imperative for libraries to develop a viable cooperative venture to sustain and maintain their existence to serve their patrons, and justify their services.

It is important to note here that the traditional concept of collection management or what is popularly called collection development in libraries is gradually being replaced by access to information and knowledge without regarding its format and location.

A researcher might not be able to get all the needed resources in a single library. For the library to remain relevant and deliver content that library users find useful, it is important to engage in information resource-sharing techniques that would at least help to address the information needs of library patrons. Omoike and Ikegune (2023) in a study, reported that for libraries to maintain the status of being educational resources for all categories of library users such as undergraduates, postgraduates, lecturers, researchers, business community, and school kids they must provide relevant information resources to meet the needs of various library users.

To this end resource sharing in libraries nowadays become necessary in order to pave way for increase in the volume of library materials and information, increasing, demand by need to trained personnel in providing effective efficient

services to users, the need to reduce cost of acquiring and processing of library materials etc. are some of the factors that lead to resource sharing according to Isaac et al (1993).

No library, however large or small, can be completely self- sufficient in terms of its resources to meet the needs of its users using the documents from its own collection; the solution is resource sharing so that maximum use can be made of limited resources.

2. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Several definitions and concepts are over the years developed and propounded in order to provide a standard and most acceptable definition of the said concept, however it is important to note the term 'resource sharing' were used interchangeable with these terms i.e. library co-operation, library networking/ linkages, inter-library loan (ILL), Library consortia, access services etc. but for the purpose of this presentation, some few ones were chosen these accordingly. Olubiyo, P. O. & Olubiyo, L. M. (2023) Says resource sharing is "an attempt by libraries to share materials and services co-operatively so as to provide one another with resource that might otherwise not be available on individual institution, it represents an attempt to expand the availability of specialized, expensive or just plain not-owned resources beyond the bounds of a single institution". This implies that resources sharing provide opportunities to avoid duplication by each participating library in the same vein, Joan, (2004:614) saw it as "the activities that result from an agreement formal 'or informal among a group of libraries (usually a constrictor or network) to share collections data, facilities personnel etc. for the benefit of their users and to reduce the expense of collection development"

Based on the above definitions, therefore, we can summarily define library

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Cooperation/Resources sharing as a programme of activities where, group of libraries come together in cooperation arrangement to share not only resources but also services for the overall educational interest of their real potential users. Resources sharing/library cooperation may either be formal or informal, general or specific. The formal resource sharing exist when two or more libraries have formal written policy and endorsement of some documents to be agreed upon and which will greatly be of assistance to the cooperating libraries. The informal resource sharing came as a result of absence of written agreement in which the cooperating libraries may offer assistance to each other at will. On the other hand, the general cooperation deals with wide range of individual libraries activities and services while the specific cooperation covers specialized activities such as cooperate provision of technical or computer, based cataloging networks e.g. (OCLC) Online Computer Library Centre. (WLN) Western Library Network, etc. One of the recent developments in library cooperation, and resources sharing has been as a result of the emergence of information technologies like the computers and telecom system. This new trend coupled with the: rapid progress in automating some library sources has been instrument and triggered resources sharing in virtually all libraries.

The earlier and more traditional cooperatives and network activity were between like types of libraries networking among different types of libraries received long-overdue stimulus with the passage of the library services and construction act and higher education act. Which provided funds for intertype. or multi-type library cooperation. Most multi types libraries cooperation occurs between public libraries and academic libraries, although some experimentation and activity with school and

special libraries has developed and gradually accelerated.

Aims and Objectives of Resource Sharing

Resource sharing is very essential in accessing the collection of various libraries because it enables participating. Libraries to get variety of documents held by various libraries and just not limiting to one's institution library. According to Rahman (2006) the aims and objectives include:

- (a) To promote free flow of information resources
- (b) To ensure better access to information resources
- (c) To ensure maximization of information resources use
- (d) To save resources and avoid duplication of efforts
- (e) To ensure faster provision of information and literature support to users.
- (f) To facilitate reciprocal exchange of load publication

Thus, idea of libraries coming together for a cooperative venture with each other is not without a purpose. Thus, stringent economic measures of a given country as it relates to the foreign exchange rate, impacts of financial squeeze common to all libraries and the governmental policy on ordering books and journals from abroad are common example. However, the participating libraries are set to pursue the following goals from the arrangement:

- a. Maintenance of constant contact among the participating libraries in the areas of mutual benefits. Each participating library will have the opportunity of knowing the resources of other libraries in case their individual clients want to use them.
- b. The participating libraries also will have added advantage of materials available in particular subject area via establishment and maintenance of union catalogue and currently the bibliographic utilities.

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c. Resource sharing may have a positive effect on library budget because some resources can be provided at a much lesser cost in cooperative arrangement than at individual's levels. And where sharing arrangement is on bibliographic utilities as in OCLC, WLN or the research library information Network (RUN), the purpose of course is.

d. To clear duplication in the database,

e. To facilitate serial check-in, acquisition control and inter-library loan.

f. To control circulation

g. To improve/develop subject research capability

h. To develop online access to a variety of biographic databases. And

i. To provide shared reference services.

3. TYPES OF LIBRARY COOPERATION/RESOURCE SHARING

There are quite a number of ways by which libraries engage in Cooperation depending on the needs of a particular library and the interest of the users. The cooperating libraries may choose any or all of the following: -

1. Cooperative acquisition is aimed at increasing the joint capacity of libraries; in cooperation to procure library materials to which all of them would have equal access. Acquisitions responsibilities are distributed in such a way that duplication is eliminated and limited book funds are used to the maximum advantage.

2. Centralized processing allows for the materials acquired to be prepared, catalogued and shelved in such a way that corresponding cards are tiled in each of the cooperating library's catalogue.

3. Joint Staff Training and Development- Orders for the staff of the cooperating libraries opportunities to come together for training programme in certain or all aspects of their

operations so as to promote exchange of ideas in areas of their resources. Such arrangement further enhances library educational programme.

4. Courier Services- cooperating libraries may wish to engage common couriers when sending books or journals they are interested in.

5. Photocopy of library materials- each of the cooperating libraries have the sharing right to photocopy materials they deem suitable for their different clienteles',

6. Bibliographic utilities- this is a shared cataloguing network such as Online- Computer Library Centre (OCLC), the Western Library Network (WLN) etc which allow local online catalogues and local circulation files to be maintained on micro-or-mini computers among the libraries in shared arrangement.

4. ADVANTAGES OF RESOURCE SHARING/LIBRARY COOPERATION.

When groups of libraries entered into cooperative arrangement, of course, they stand to gain from each other. Some of the merits of such arrangement include: -

a. provision of library services at less cost. Because the materials to be purchased at exorbitant prices may be available at the cooperative level.

b. It improves service performance. Because the ultimate possibility to set objective ^may not, be. Possible for an individual library but can be achieved through the cooperative venture.

c. It reduces the seeming inequalities of financial support common to all libraries by bringing library, services to new areas, improving the existing services through enriching collections of other libraries.

d. The advent of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) has positively impacted on the services and operations of the libraries, as heavy demands being made on library resources

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and services are greatly tackled. Prompt quest are met with prompt answers. Access to current data or information at a much higher speed is enhanced.

e. Bibliographic access to holdings of other libraries is made possible through such cooperation, because it entails providing clientele the right to utilize the bibliographic tools (i.e. Catalogues) of the cooperating library.

Libraries typically have limited budgets, and investing in cooperative efforts can be costly. Libraries may struggle to justify the cost of infrastructure, staffing, and technology needed for cooperation. Internet connectivity is very expensive in Africa considering her economic condition. According to Ramadas (2024), limited financial resources can hinder the acquisition and maintenance of ICT infrastructure and tools.

However, in spite of all the above advantages which each of the participating libraries is expected to gain (Aguolu, 2002:377) asserted that: -

Success of inter-libraries loans depends, upon many factors which include the degree of the cooperation between the borrowing and the lending, libraries, efficient Telecom facilities and transport system, finance to support the institutions, as inter-library loan is expensive and the readiness of libraries to re-order services beyond the local confines and the availability of adequate bibliographic tools identification and location. Other advantages as highlighted by Martey (2002) include;

1. Enhancement service through access to more information available in consortia member libraries
2. Chapel and more effective services
3. Document delivery services
4. Selective dissemination of information
5. Electronic conferences
6. Skills development available through co-operative arrangements.

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5. DISADVANTAGES OF RESOURCE SHARING

Despite the numerous benefits the cooperating libraries stand to gain from each other, library cooperation is not without problems, thus: -

1. Cost of accessibility to materials from other libraries may sometimes exceed the cost of purchasing the same material for local collections.
2. Libraries may become more a borrower of materials than lender consequent upon which resources sharing become drained instead of a source of additional materials.
3. There is the risk of loss or damage and financial commitment of the materials to be exchanged.
4. That the requested materials may be in greater demand that the holding library cannot afford to allow it out on inter library loan for any Length of time.
5. That if all libraries turn to resource sharing, eventually none will have any book to lend.

Comparison of Resource Sharing Between Developed and Developing Nations

It is a general belief that no country or a library in the world can boost all materials to satisfy the needs of its users. For this reason, therefore, it becomes imperative for libraries in all countries to imbibe the culture of sharing their resources among themselves for the overall objective of satisfying their user's information needs. However, cooperative arrangement may depend on and differs from one country to another though the aim is almost the same for instance, networks in the United-States have developed at the local, state, intra state, interstate, regional and national levels. Local cooperatives or networks tend to be in metropolitan or urban areas, are voluntary, loosely organized, and minimally funded. Local Networks generally consist of one single type of library e.g. academic or of two types-academic

and public. In some urban areas metropolitan malty type library organizations have developed; New York City, Cleveland are examples of successful efforts. Reciprocal borrowing, interlibrary loan (ICT), local delivery services, cooperative collection development and telephone reference services are the major activities undertaken.

In England, six New England land-grant university libraries joined together, to form the New, England Library and information Network (NALINET) whose primary purpose was to supply its members with offline computerized bibliography sources, a machine-readable catalogue data file, catalogue data file searching, catalogue cards, and book-pockets and labels. In South Africa, the library networking traditions have been found in the past few years. Two of the major library' networking are the Cape Library Cooperative (CALICO)' and Gauteng and Environs Library Consortium, (GAELIC) And some of their major' objectives were to:

- i. Promote resource sharing and enhance access to information.
- ii. Facilitate access to information through shared computer systems and network.
- iii. Build links with other types of libraries in region as appropriate
- iv. To formulate appropriate collection development and acquisitions policies among members and to explore ways of saving costs

6. RESOURCE SHARING IN NIGERIA

The library cooperation/Resources sharing can be traced to the (1955) memorandum which was submitted by John Harris to the Federal government as in which a historical survey of library development in Nigeria was made and strategies outlined for national growth

of various services including setting up of a library committee as well as joint utilization of reference services and research activities. Other reports and recommendations have since followed along similar lines and their conclusions were that cooperative practice among libraries is the best in satisfying the individual library users' requirements.

However, with the recent advances in (1CTS), Nigeria set up a standard for the development of a bibliographic data known as NIGERMARC and NIGERNET in order to pool resource together (ineffective cooperative purposes The NIGERMARC provide a central catalogue data base for the country. Through' the-use of NIGERMARC, Nigeria will also can participate arid use the product of universal bibliographic control.

As for the NIGERNET, the main aim is to aid libraries throughout the federation in housekeeping procedures by providing information in machine-Readable Catalogue format in all participating libraries. And where possible indicate the holding of each participating libraries-via central database that connect them By this arrangement each sub-net will have a switching center which lease activities with the sub-network arid; linked with the national networks. The advent of ITs has seriously impacted on, the library operation and resources across the globe particularly in the area of resource sharing/cooperation.

7. CONCLUSION

The need for library' cooperation/resource sharing cannot be underestimated, prices of books, journals and other library materials of information value are too exorbitant and are therefore not within purchasing power of many libraries. This necessitates the adoption of resources sharing scheme by virtually all types of libraries across the globe.

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8. RECOMMENDATIONS:

In any academic discourse observations are made, problems raised with a view to finding solution. In this case, however, we deem it right to proffer some recommendations for successful resource sharing among libraries.

- That there should be realistic and effective library planning,
- That a well-defined library legislation be enacted for effective cooperation.
- That there should be standardized library practices among the cooperating libraries.
- That adequate number of qualified staff be employed to manage and handle resource sharing successfully.
- That the library budget should be increased to enable the cooperating library to sustain the arrangement.
- That computing and telecommunication facilities be installed to facilitate effective resource sharing,
- That there should be an improved power supply or a generating plan! To supplement power failures,

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