



Library Cooperation and Service Delivery: Process, Progress and Challenges in Private Universities in South Western Nigeria

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 22 November 2017;

Received in revised form:

11 December 2018;

Accepted: 22 December 2018;

Keywords

Library Cooperation,
Library Facilities,
Private Universities.

ABSTRACT

Library cooperation (LC) stems out of the fact that no library can be self-sufficient in terms of funding and resources available for service delivery. Funding level could affect library collection, staffing, facilities, equipment and even buildings which are all areas where the impact of library cooperation could be visible. The level of resources including funding available to Nigerian universities especially the privately owned makes library cooperation an issue for consideration. Resources to meet vital requirements in some of the institutions are not available and the library is always considered as a minor when allocating resources, this further softens the ground for venturing into Library Cooperation. This paper which studied ten (10) private universities in Southwest Nigeria highlights the areas of Library Cooperation among universities, the process, the progress and the challenges. It concluded that libraries in these institutions are still developing.

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Introduction

With diminishing investment in libraries, and worse still in private universities by their proprietors, it is rarely possible that a library will have enough resources to fulfill the needs of their users. This is the more reason why collaboration of a sort is essential, particularly in private libraries in developing countries.

Also, in an age of information explosion, no library however big it may be is able to satisfy all the needs of its user due to various constraints. In this age, the most challenging task for the information professionals and information centres all over the world is to track the huge information that are generated world over. No library can single handedly gather the huge information which evolve globally. This is why the phenomenon of consortia has become very important in the last few years (Anwarul Islam, 2009).

Consortium of libraries is well known for sharing of resources all over the world. Several libraries in the world have formed consortia to share their human and electronic resources.

Definition

Library cooperation is an umbrella term for a wide spectrum of cooperation and processes and mechanisms for libraries. A related term commonly used now is coined as 'Library Linkages'. Verzosa (2004) defined it as a reciprocally beneficial sharing of resources developed or pre-existing by two or more libraries.

Cooperative collection development is one of the oldest forms of collaboration between libraries. This is because if one library will acquire a little or accept primary collecting responsibilities in a defined area, other libraries can benefit by avoiding duplication in acquiring titles of marginal interest (Skipper, 1979).

Resource sharing (Library Cooperation) may be established by informal or formal agreements or by contract and may operate locally, regionally, nationally or

internationally. Resources shared may be collection, bibliographic data, personnel, planning activities (Seal, 2001).

Seal went on to state that a written agreement is a common feature of collaboration between two or more libraries especially when participants are separated by geographic and political borders. He also believed that 'sharing' goes beyond materials. It could be building, knowledge of foreign language holdings local municipal documents and archives. It could also mean sharing expertise on technical matters, preservation issues, assisting colleagues on information with particular issue or problem. Libraries also share methodology, how tasks are performed in varying situations.

Sharing takes place numerous times daily since it is not place or time bound. It could be on telephone and increasingly in cyberspace, e-mail and World Wide Web or at professional meetings (Seal, 1979).

Indergaard (2004) in her work "breaking down the walls" also opined that cooperation between libraries and other sections of the society must represent a step forward.

Private Universities in Nigeria

As at December 2016, private universities in Nigeria were sixty nine (69) (45.10%) out of the total one hundred and fifty three (153) universities in the country. Federal and states governments each had forty two (42) (27.45%) universities each. This number makes the private universities a considerable proportion to reckon with.

These institutions came up as a result of the inability of the public institutions to cope with the surging admission problems encountered by young secondary school leavers. Before 1999, when the first three private universities were licensed, the available public institutions then which were less than fifty (50) could barely offer placement to eight percent (8%) of applicants. Even now with many universities in the country, less than ten percent (10%) of applicants are placed. Apart from the reason of capacity, the quality of education delivery in public schools was also bei

questioned. Poor library services, laboratories, classrooms, personnel were all in inadequate supply. Government then felt that the reforms as at then in other sectors of the economy such as banking, energy, transportation, industries and the likes should also be extended to the education sector. Private ownerships were then encouraged to obtain intent forms for setting up universities which a body was put in place by the federal government for that purpose to screen. The first set of approval was in 1999 when three (3) proposals were approved. They were Igbinedion University, Babcock University and Madonna University.

Why Library Cooperation

Just as stated earlier, no matter the level of available funds to institutions, no library can be self-sufficient in terms of resources. At the early inception of university education in Nigeria, there were just five (5) of them which were regarded as first generation universities. They were the University of Ibadan (1948), Universities of Lagos and Ife, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and University of Nigeria, Nsukka all established between 1961 and 1962. They were to cater for the tertiary education interests of people from the three (3) regions of the country West, East and North. During that time, library cooperation thrived well and was well managed.

Documents from various countries in Africa were sourced for according to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between these universities. Government publications in all these countries were available according to the sharing formula. Ibadan was to collect publications according to her share of African countries. The same applied to other Universities. Then there was hardly any information that was not available. The vehicle of location then was an effective Union Catalogue (UC). Though Information Technology (IT) was almost non-existent and transportation system was not thoroughly developed postal system was very thorough.

That time, the major area of cooperation was in document delivery. The contemporary practice is a bit more elaborate as it cuts across service, personnel, equipment and even building and the channels of cooperation include various Information Technology (IT) devices.

Nature of funding of libraries in the various institutions under review also should encourage cooperation. Government of the day funds public institutions belonging to them very well. Apart from the library development levies which each of these institutions charge, government through an intervention agency, the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) grants at least four hundred thousand US dollars (\$400, 000) and annually to each public university which was not available to private universities which depend solely on tuition fees.

Goals of Library Cooperation

Verzosa (2004) summarized the goals of library cooperation as including:

- Communication/networking
- Cooperative programme
- Economies of scale (when mass producing results in a good and lower average cost)
- Pooled purchasing
- Funding support
- Sharing risks

Library cooperation in selected private universities in southwest Nigeria

Out of the sixty nine (69) licensed private universities in Nigeria as at December 2016, about forty (40) are in the Southwest region. The mode of governance, funding and population in this institutions are similar. In these institutions, very few can boast of good funding of the library to the tune of about thirty thousand US dollars (\$30, 000) annually. This is expected to cater for books, journals and other services.

Apart from funding, majority of these institutions took off from existing facilities and in most cases libraries were not purpose built. As of now, just about (4) out these ten (10) have moved to their permanent sites. These make services very difficult to render. Personnel capacity in the libraries also was a source of concern. All these made the issue of possible collaboration always coming to mind.

For this study, areas of possible library cooperation studied include staff and staff matters, document delivery, building and capacity building.

Methodology

A structured questionnaire was constructed which was used to elicit information on the issues listed above. It was administered orally by visits to some and through phone calls. Ten (10) private universities randomly selected from all the six (6) states that make up the Southwest region of Nigeria were selected for the study. They are:

1. Afe Babalola University - Ekiti State
2. Bells University of Technology - Ogun State
3. Crawford University, Igbesa - Ogun State
4. Mc Pherson University, Seriki Sotayo - Ogun State
5. Redeemer's University, Mowe - Ogun State
6. Leads City University, Ibadan - Oyo State
7. Caleb University, Imota - Lagos State
8. Fountain University, Osogbo - Osun State
9. Adeleke University, Ede - Osun State
10. Wesley University of Science Technology, Ondo - Ondo State

The University Librarians in all these universities were the respondents who provided information about their

S/n	Universities	Staffing			Document delivery	Staff cooperation	Conference	Facilities
		PROF	PARA	LA				
1	ABUAD	9	4	7	x	x	x	x
2	Bells University	9	3	4	√	√	x	x
3	Leads City University	9	5	3	x	x	x	x
4	Crawford University	6	4	7	x	x	x	x
5	Caleb University	2	3	3	x	x	x	x
6	McPherson University	3	1	3	x	x	x	x
7	Fountain University	3	1	2	x	x	x	x
8	Redeemer's University	6	3	9	x	x	√	x
9	Adeleke University	4	2	2	x	x	x	x
10	WUSTO	4	2	6	x	x	x	x

Prof: Professional librarians with a minimum qualification of Master in Library Science

Para: Para-professional librarians are senior library staff without a degree in Library Studies. They are expected to have Diploma in Library Studies

LA: Library Assistants are junior staff in the library

university libraries. The information provided is interpreted in the table below.

From the foregoing, it was seen that only five (5) universities had more than five (5) Professional Librarians which was considered a bit adequate for their population. Most of the libraries apart from McPherson and Fountain Universities had Para-professional Librarians in the ratio that was considered as adequate by Ifidon and Ifidon (2007) who felt that one Para-professional Librarian should serve four (4) Professionals.

None of the ten (10) libraries had Library Assistants in the required ratio.

This was definitely inadequate for an average student and staff population of about two thousand (2, 000) in the universities. It may be noted that only one or two of these institutions have students population in excess of 02 this figure.

The research also revealed that only Bells University of Technology, Ota cooperated with other libraries in the area of document delivery and staffing; none of the remaining nine (9) Universities cooperated except the Redeemer's University which cooperated in conferences. In fact, in all the four (4) parameters checked and forty (40) frequencies, only three (3) frequencies came on. This was a paltry approximated 8 percent (7.5%).

Verzosa (2004) also listed the Manila Consortium achievement as including:

- Cooperative Cataloguing
- Cooperative Indexing
- Union Lists
- These Databases
- Digitalization
- Standardized Library Handbooks
- Discount on Book Purchases
- Discount on Online Databases
- Book Fairs

As observed above, Library Cooperation in private universities in Nigeria could achieve all those but the infrastructure in place now is not supporting it yet. In those days, few of these were achieved and the Information Technology (IT) related ones can easily be achieved now with some sort of support.

Challenges

With the above scenario, we have seen that Library Cooperation was either not available or in its infancy stages in libraries where it existed at all in all the ten (10) libraries studied and a safe inference could be deduced as obtainable in most of the private universities in Nigeria. The reason for this could be:

1. Lack of insufficient materials in the library to warrant sharing.

2. Funding support scheme available for private universities was inadequate hence; a lot of what was needed could not be afforded.

3. Most libraries, particularly private universities libraries operated from adapted buildings which were not purpose built. Out of the ten (10) libraries under review, only one operated in a purpose built library.

4. Capacity building was a luxury and not a necessity, hence little interaction existed.

5. Infrastructural provision was not adequate in some institutions in Nigeria. This could be attributed to national or local issues. National in the area of energy and other related logistics and local in terms of provision of internet services.

6. A major issue for consideration particularly in document delivery was the issue of integrity. In areas where this is in doubt, many librarians may not wish to entrust their documents in the hands of colleagues when they were not sure of retrieving them when due.

7. Communication and transportation could also affect free flow of Library Cooperation.

8. Limited personnel

9. Outdated technology

10. Lack of standard

11. Fear of loss

12. Copyright issue

13. Negative attitude

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