THE NEED FOR A LIBRARY CONSORTIUM AMONG COLLEGES OF EDUCATION LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Much has been said by professionals in the field of librarianship concerning the impossibility of an individual library to be self-sufficient. Besides, the information explosion has resulted into much generation of electronic information resources, which has put many libraries in a quandary with regards to purchasing resources and processing and storing as well as the dissemination of the processed information. In view of these developments, the paper discusses the issue of self-sufficiency among libraries and relates it with the basic functions of libraries, which include information dissemination, the preservation of knowledge and the cultural heritage acquisition of reading resources as well as the position of academic libraries in the National Policy on Education, which classifies the libraries as educational services educational goals cannot be achieve without their input. The paper further explains the relevance of reading resources to effective library services especially the electronic resources that are

multiplying rapidly as a result of advancement in information communication technologies (ICTs). Hence, all cannot be purchased by a single library. Consequent upon this, the paper emphasizes the need for library collaboration in the name of the library consortium. It therefore discusses the concept of library consortium and the steps to achieve it among Colleges of Education libraries. These steps include sensitization campaigns, the development of a blue-print, etc. The paper concludes that a library consortium among Colleges of Education libraries is inevitable based on its importance and recommends, among others, that there should be legislation to that effect so as to have a very good foundation for the library consortium among Colleges of Education libraries.

Introduction

The paper discusses the concept of a library consortium and its relevance to libraries in Colleges of Education. This will maximize and facilitate access to knowledge, which, according to Eisenberg (1990:12), "is more important than ownership". Though these concepts, library cooperation, networking, collaboration, resource sharing and consortium are closely similar in meaning and would be used inter-wovenly in the course of discussing a library consortium in Colleges of Education. The axiomatic expression from librarians that a library cannot be an island of its own is quite relevant and

worthy of consideration, especially in developing countries like Nigeria. This is so because the purchasing power of the libraries in Nigeria with regard to information resources is evident to the technical meaning of this axiom. Libraries as social institutions, as observed by Aguolus and Aguolus (2002:2), "are created to conserve knowledge, preserve the cultural heritage; provide information; under grid and underpin education and research; and to serve as functions of recreation". With these responsibilities assigned to libraries, they need many information resources, both modern and traditional, to carry out such responsibilities. The information resources are, therefore, one of the components of a standard library supposed to be available and relevant to the users' information needs for individual and societal development. As such, they are the bedrock for effective and meaningful library services and therefore indispensable. These information resources are broadly divided into two, namely, the traditional and the modern. The traditional resources include books, serial materials, reference resources, audio-visual materials, etc. while the modern resources that are today multiplying rapidly as a result of advancement in information and communication technologies include databases, e-books and e-journals, online bibliographic records, etc.

However, in the history of library development, no single library has ever acquired all the resources for its clientele. This might be as a result of so many reasons, ranging from inadequate funding, space problems, the rising of price of publication, knowledge explosion, etc.

(Bozimo 2011, Aguolus 2002). This might be the reason why Malumfashi (1998:191) asserts that:

> The adage that "no man is an island" likewise, no library can have all the requirements of its clientele. It most have some limitations in terms of funds, personnel, technology and even knowledge of all the relevant information resources being produced that are of use to the clientele.

Similarly, in what can be viewed as a strong support to Malumfashi's assertion, Patil and Kooganuramath (2008) opine that "we live in a world of knowledge explosion, 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 growth of information in the form of books, periodicals, theses and other research publications". These scholastic assertions indicate that libraries worldwide can never deem it possible to acquire the literature published individually, but the users have the right to ask for all (Patil and Kooganuramath 2008). This inability of any library to be self-sufficient in terms of resources has resulted to the resource sharing concept, especially among libraries that have common goals. The resource sharing, according to professionals, gave birth to library cooperation, library collaboration, library coordination library networking and library consortium.

These terminologies are being used interchangeably by libraries to explain the concept of resource sharing,

where it was said that the participating libraries are symbiotically related to each other. In other words, there is a kind of reciprocal gesture, implying a partnership in which each participating member has something to contribute to others and is always willing to contribute what it has when needed (Ikpaahindi 2006). On the one hand, Harrod (1990) described library cooperation as an association of libraries and similar institutions formed for mutual assistance and understanding functions where the sharing of resources or the division of costs can be advantageous and efficient. While Harrod (1990) defined networking as a system of physically separate computers with telecommunication links, allowing the resources of each participating institution to be shared by each participating institution to be shared by each of the others. In his contribution, Tiwari (2014:144) states that"A library network is broadly described as a group of libraries coming together with some agreement of understanding to help each other with a view to satisfying the information needs of their clientele". Similarly, Chaudhery (2011:213) defines a library consortium as "a group of libraries that agree to pool their resources by allowing the users of each institution some type of access to the resources of all institutions, either through inter-library loan or borrowing privileges". To support this view, Tiwari, (2011) further gave a clarification on the little difference between a library consortium and the remaining related terminologies where he states that "libraries consortium was the earliest stage of library cooperation''. While networks came into vogue for sharing resources till this period, the library resources were mainly in traditional

printed format. The networks created their bibliographical databases. He concluded that with the advent of e-resources, the concept of consortia has been mooted mainly for the acquisition of e-journals. Therefore based on this clarification, coupled with vast production of e-resources as a result of advancement in information and communication technologies (ICTs), the library consortium of today will be mainly on e-resources. Furthermore, Bozimo (2011:6) describes a consortium "as a practical demonstration of the aphorism that united we stand, divided we fall". Also, while citing Nula and Darko, Bozimo (2011:8) he maintains that "several reasons have been advanced for the worldwide growth of consortia. They include the exponential growth of information; the rise in the cost of publications; increasing demand by users for better services and the need to improve inter-lending services library cooperation".

The Need for a Consortium among Colleges Libraries

In her attempt to justify the need for the formation of a consortium for Nigerian university libraries, Bozimo (2011:8) opines that "given the size of Nigeria and the fact that economies of scale feature very prominently in the costing of these resources, an omnibus consortium, made up of all types of libraries, special, school, public, research and academic would have been most sensible, especially if funds were centrally available". In an earlier contribution to the justification of resource sharing among libraries, Patil and dOkoogamuramath (2008) comment that, "libraries cannot dream of

acquiring all the literature, published worldwide individually but the users have the right to ask for all''. Thus, the 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 also.

Based on the aforementioned conceptual framework on the terminologies that revolve around 'resource sharing' and coupled with the reasons given on the indispensability of resource sharing among libraries, especially those with similar information needs, one can now say that it is inevitable for libraries in Colleges of Education in Nigeria to resort to a kind of cooperation on their resources.

Colleges of Education Libraries

These are libraries found in higher institutions of learning that are statutorily allowed to handle teacher education programmes. The goals of the programme are clearly stated by the National Poly on Education NPE (2014), which, among others, include the production of highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all the levels of our educational system, etc. Furthermore, section 101 of the NPE clearly states that "to achieve these goals; (e) The library is at the heart of the education enterprise''. The virtual library as a flatform for sharing knowledge is aimed at rejuvenating schools through the provision of current books, journals and other information resources using digital library. Besides, sub-section (f) of the NPE (2014) adds that "since libraries constitute one of the most important

educational services, proprietors of schools shall also provide functional libraries in all their educational institutions in accordance with the established standards. They should provide for training of librarians and library assistants for their services''.

With these policy statements on libraries generally from the NPE, one cannot hesitate to say that academic library services are inevitable as far as the attainment of educational goals are concerned. Thus, Colleges of Education in Nigeria cannot do without libraries for facilitating teaching and learning activities. It is therefore expected to provide well organized and up to date information resources and other library services Ramlal (2010:2) states that "The overall aim of a library regardless of its location, size or parent organization is to provide organized library services to meet the information needs of its clientele in their activities relating to education, research, management and any other specialized services''. Consequent upon this, libraries in Colleges of Education should do everything possible to acquire relevant reading resources and employ qualified librarians in order to maximize access to such resources, so as to achieve the desired objectives. At the same time, the libraries should be mindful of the fact that it is impossible to be self-sufficient due to so many factors, which include inadequate funds and qualified personnel, library space and facilities, etc. Therefore, an alternative like library consortium can be a better option.

The Significance of a Library Consortium

It is a fact that advancement in science and technology has entirely changed the world in almost all walks of life. One of the areas that has greatly been impacted by information and communication technologies (ICTs) is information business which library is among its agencies. Libraries in the words of Tiwari (2014:204) "were considered only as the storehouses of knowledge, have got a new outlook in the modern ICT era''. The activities which are carried out manually in libraries with so much of pain and strain are being carried out smoothly with the help of ICT with greater effectiveness. Furthermore, ICT has contributed so much to the explosion of information and knowledge in the recent time. This has generally greatly changed the roles/functions of libraries.

Though the concept of library consortia has been mooted mainly for the acquisition of e-journals, as observed by Chaudhery, (2011:213), he equally made a superior argument that "though library consortium has been created with a narrow purpose, these can be turned in to efficient instrument for sharing all types of library resources". In addition to this, if one makes a critical analysis on library resources today, one can be convinced that the paradigm shift is e-resources as a result of the advancement in ICTs. Therefore it may not be out of point if a library consortium is recommended for libraries in Colleges of Education. More so, the information resources are similar and they have the same funding source. This is one of the reasons given by

Bozimo (2011) on why libraries in the Nigerian Universities formed a consortium in 2004 known as "The Consortium of Nigerian University Libraries" (NULIB).

Types of Consortia

Many writers on the concept of consortia have classified it into many classes. The one that is very explicit came from Chaudhery (2011). He broadly categorized consortia into two, namely:

(a) Consortia of multi-type libraries are the type that the participating libraries are of different types, such as public academic and special.

(b) Consortia of same type of libraries are the one where members are of the same type, such as a consortium of public libraries, a consortium of academic libraries etc.

In addition to this, Chandhery (2011) gave further explanation on the sub division of library consortia based on some points of view. To him a consortium can be formed based on the point of view of geographical region of coverage. The consortia under this point of view may be of the following types.

(i) Local Level Consortia: libraries situated in a particular city, town or district.

(ii) State Level Consortia: Libraries of one particular state participate.

(iii) National Level Consortia: All the Libraries of a country are its members.

(iv) International Level Consortia: Libraries belonging to different counties participate.

Consortia formed based on subjects or area of coverage point of view.

(i) Single discipline oriented consortia; a consortium dealing with same or similar disciplines. And

(ii) Multi-discipline-oriented consortia, such a consortium deals with resources in multi disciplines (multi subjects).

Consortia formed based on organizational point of view, include:

(i) Loosely knit federation; in this type, there is no central body of dedicated staff to look after the consortium activities. Libraries join hands for some immediate gain for a particular purpose.

(ii) Tightly knit organization: This type of consortium is of permanent nature and has a central body with the membership of participating libraries for guiding the activities of the consortium and also some dedicated staff for performing the consortium activities.

Consortia formed based on the basis of formation include:

(i) Non-sponsored Consortia: This type of consortium is formed voluntarily by participating libraries by sharing the expenses.

(ii) Sponsored Consortia: This type of consortium is sponsored by a central organization and the major expenses are borne by it. Here, sometimes the sponsoring body itself carries out major activities of the consortium.

The Benefits of Library Consortia/Cooperation/Collaboration, etc

Many writers have written on the benefits of a library consortium and its related concepts. This write up has enumerated some of these benefits from some writers like Bozimo (2011), Agboola et al (2006), Chaudhery (2011) and Kalu and West (2015).

These benefits include:

(a) Collaborative resource sharing both traditional and digital of member libraries through network or document delivery service as the case may be.

(b) Cooperative acquisition of materials among the member libraries.

(c) Cooperative processing of information resources acquired through consortium.

(d) Ensuring better access to information resources.

(e) Allowing reciprocal borrowing by the members of all libraries of the consortium.

(f) Compilation of bibliographical and/or full text database of the holdings of the member libraries both print and non-print.

(g) Creation of visual library, covering all the e-information resources available in member libraries by networking of these libraries.

(h) Facilitation of reciprocal exchange of local publications.

(i) Saving resources and avoiding duplication effort.

(j) Developing common interface to catalogues, databases and e-collection by creating portal.

(k) Supporting member libraries for setting up of institutional repositories, e-repositories, e-print archives, electronic thesis collection, etc.

(l) Sharing the storage facilities, thereby minimizing expenditure on space.

(m) Sharing human resources at local, regional and national levels.

(n) Pooling expert manpower and promoting professional development.

(o) Facilitating joint preservation and archiving activities for print and digital materials etc.

Plan of Action

Since there is a total of eighty three (83) Colleges of Education in Nigeria, which include Federal, State and Private Institutions (NCCE, 2015 Website), the NCCE Website, reveals that Colleges of Education that belong to Federal Government are twenty two in number (22), those for State Governments are forty-seven in number (47) while the remaining fourteen (14) belong to Private Organizations. It is therefore necessary to point out that the Federal and State owned Colleges of Education Libraries, which, if put together will be sixty-nine in number (69), should go ahead to form a consortium for obvious benefits. These libraries can now take the advantage of their similarities and new technologies to revolutionize the information services being rendered.

Challenges: However, the challenges the libraries of these Colleges may likely face include:

Sensitization Campaign among the Libraries

There should be a campaign of awareness among the College Librarians on the importance and urgency of a consortium. The best forum for the campaign is through their association called "Committee of College Librarians in Nigeria (COCLIN). This association conducts meetings and conferences annually. It is at this forum that the idea should be presented and deliberated by the heads of these libraries for necessary action. It is advisable at this point that a sub-committee should be set

up to study the project (consortium) and come up with a report to the association. The sub-committee should do a thorough homework by consulting the literature available on the concept and individuals or organizations that matter on the formation of a library consortium. This will enable the sub-committee to come up with a sound and reliable report, which could transform it into a working document.

Liaising with CULNUS: the committee of College Librarians in Nigeria (COCLIN) should liaise with its counterpart in the Nigerian Universities called "Committee of University Librarians of Nigerian Universities'' (CULNU), which, according to Bozimo (2011), is apex governing body of the consortium (NULIB). This will enable the College Librarians to have access to relevant documented evidence that led to the formation of NULIB in 2004. The documented evidence will reveal such information on the challenges faced by CULNU before, during and after the formation of NULIB. This information will greatly assist in forming a consortium among the Colleges Libraries.

Official engagement of relevant bodies: After the preliminary study by COCLIN, the stakeholders involved should be officially informed on the said mission. These stakeholders include the Federal Ministry of Education, National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) and the National or International Organizations relevant to the project and found helpful from the documented evidence of CULNU.

Production of a blueprint: COCLIN as the proposed highest governing body of the planned consortium should come up with a blueprint on how to go about the project. This should be circulated among the participating libraries and the relevant bodies that have earlier been mentioned. This should be followed with necessary actions that could possible lead to the real formation of the consortium.

Conclusion and Recommendations

For the fact that the libraries of today are in a quandary as to how to manage the information explosion, Chaudhery (2011:84) stated that "developments in the publishing world provided information resources in electronic formats''. The libraries in Colleges of Education in Nigeria have no better option than to form a consortium that can handle the storage, organization, retrieval and dissemination of information efficiently. The collaborative effort through the consortium can enhance access to a variety of electronic resources with considerable bargaining power over publishers and vendors and cooperative collection development among the member libraries. The paper therefore concludes that as a result of the libraries' similarities on users' resources and funding source(s) or capabilities, the formation of a consortium similar to that of the Nigerian University Libraries (NULIB) will be a panacea to their financial constraints, especially on purchasing power, low reciprocal borrowing among the libraries and information resources sharing (both traditional and digital resource), etc. This could be achieved through a

concerted effort among the Colleges Libraries with full support from the supervisory and funding bodies, i.e. the Federal Ministry of Education (FME), the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund). Based on this, the following recommendations are made:-

Recommendations

i. Be it as it may, the colleges of education libraries in Nigeria should go for the second broad type of consortia, i.e. "Consortia of same libraries". This is recommended because the libraries are solely established to facilitate teaching and learning activities. As such, they are purely academic and have same information needs, because the central target is to support the parent bodies to produce quality teachers. More so, these libraries have the same central body (i.e. National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and the same sponsoring body (i.e. the Tertiary Education Trust Fund, TETFund). With these similarities, the establishment of a consortium may not be a difficult task.

ii. Available literature on the concept of a consortium, i.e. its formation and benefits (especially journal articles) should be critically studied by all those concerned in Colleges Libraries for proper understanding and necessary actions.

iii. Since library resources are presently more of e-resources as a result of "information explosion", the librarians of Colleges of Education libraries should try their possible efforts to convince their institutions and their Management Members to appreciate that these e-resources are the major tools for teaching, learning and research in the modern age. This will facilitate the formation of a consortium among the libraries.

iv. The technological infrastructures in these libraries should be upgraded. Where there are none they should be provided. This is important because the proposed library consortium cannot be effective in libraries with low quality infrastructure or none in existence.

v. The Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) should be ready to accept and support the proposed library consortium of Colleges of Education. This is important, because presently TETFund is the major source funding of these libraries.

vi. There should be a legislation backing the library consortium exercise so as to have a solid foundation.

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