
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PRACTICES OF RESOURCE SHARING AMONG ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH- SOUTH NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated the practice of resource sharing among Academic Libraries in Federal Universities in the South-South Geo-Political zone of Nigeria. The survey research design was employed for the study. The population for the study consists of the federal universities in the zone, except the Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun. The questionnaire and interview method, were used to collect data for the study. The findings showed that the only forms of resource sharing practiced amongst the studied libraries are inter-library lending and inter-library study facilities. Communication, financial, infrastructural constraints and absence of full automation were identified as some challenges affecting resource sharing. Recommendations were therefore put forward.

Keywords: resource sharing; inter library loan; library cooperation; library consortium

Introduction

Resource sharing emanates from two words- Resource and Sharing. Resource applies to anything person or action to which one turn for aid in the time of need (Kent, 1978). It is a useful or valuable possession of an organization or person. (Procter, 2002) Similarly, sharing connotes apportioning, allotting or contributing something that is owned to benefit others. Therefore, resource sharing also known as Inter-library cooperation —is the process whereby two or more libraries voluntarily come together with the aim of making their different types of materials and services available to one another that is sending material from one particular library to another as well as receiving materials in return from the participating libraries|| (Kent 1978:293).

Nigeria is a country in the continent of Africa. The South-South is one of its geo-political zones and it comprises of six States namely Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers States. These States have six Federal Universities located in these zones namely: University of Uyo in Akwa Ibom State, University of Calabar in Cross River State, University of Benin in Edo State, University of Port-Harcourt in Rivers State, Federal University, Otuoke, Bayelsa State and Federal University of Petroleum Resources Effurun, Delta State. All these Federal Universities have libraries which are called Academic libraries -- libraries situated in the institutions of higher learning, which is the focus of this study.

Resource sharing is a vital practice in every library especially academic Libraries. This is fuelled by the simple fact that no library can boast of self sufficiency. The above assertion coupled with the fact that knowledge has continued to grow over the years due to the high rate at which researches are conducted and their findings published for the purpose of educating people. In this regard, the insatiable thirst of library users for information has led librarians and libraries into taking part in resource sharing or inter-library cooperation.

Therefore this, study investigates the resource sharing practices of Federal University libraries in South-South Nigeria.

Purpose of study

The purpose of this study includes:

To investigate if Resource-sharing is practiced among the Academic Libraries of the Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria.

To highlight on the types of resource sharing practiced among the Academic libraries of the Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria.

Enumerate the gains of Resource sharing amongst the Academic libraries of the Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria.

To examine the challenges faced during the course of resource sharing by the Academic libraries in Federal Universities in South- South Nigeria.

Research questions

The following research questions are posed for the study.

- Is resource sharing practiced among Academic libraries of the Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria?
- What are the types of resource sharing practiced among Academic libraries of the Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria?
- What are the gains of resource sharing among Academic Libraries in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria?
- What are the challenges faced during the course of Resource sharing by the Academic libraries in the Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria?

Literature review

Resource sharing or Inter-library cooperation denotes a mode of cooperation whereby library functions are shared in common by a number of

libraries. Edeka (2000) defined resource sharing as the joint and voluntary action of two or more library to achieve the desired goal. Anyaoku (1993) supported Edeka when he lifted Mccolvin and Revia who in their work stated there is no one library not even the British Museum in which a reader could find everything he might require. Yet any reader anywhere, anytime for any purpose might need a book. The only way he can get it is by Inter-library cooperation or resource sharing.

Resource sharing arrangements is one way through which libraries build their collections especially in the developing countries where funding of libraries is a case of study itself. It is a practice evolved by libraries to improve their services to the library users by broadening their bases of information availability. Libraries need this service like an individual who need interaction with others as an important part of his living. Edeka (2000). In support of this view, Okolo (2002) stated that no library is self sufficient hence libraries depend on one another to obtain the material or service in which they are lacking.

The following types of Resource sharing practices exist as noted by Anyaoku, (1993). Clarke, (1999) Edeka, (2000), Okolo (2000), namely: Inter-library lending, Cooperative Acquisition, Exchange of information materials, Inter-library study facilities joint publications and interchange of staff..

Inter-library lending has been described as one of the foremost and oldest form of resource sharing between libraries. It is a system whereby users of one library or Information System may request their service points to borrow from other library systems, materials not held in their own library system.

Cooperative acquisition is the coming together of two or more libraries to purchase or acquire their materials. This is essential to ensure adequate coverage of library materials. Anyaoku (1993) opined that libraries get involved in this scheme to ensure availability of acquired items within a region or country. The

best known cooperative acquisition scheme is the Farmington plan in the United States of America(Edoaka 2000) and the German Research Association (Anyaoku,1993).

Exchange of information materials involves an arrangement whereby a library exchange its duplicate or specially purchased items for those of another library. Clarke (2001:109) noted that these can be inform of inaugural lectures, guest lectures, Almanac, Scholarly and house journal in exchange for those of other libraries.

Interlibrary study facilities is a system of allowing the students, both under graduates, postgraduates and researchers to use the facilities of a library on recommendation. Obaro, (2007) supported this when she noted that this can take the shape of in service training or allowing staff and students of one educational institution to use the facilities available in other institutions.

Joint Publications connotes a situation where two or more libraries are responsible for the existence of a publication. In this system such works may centre on aspects of the holdings or the entire holdings of libraries jointly undertaking the venture. A good example is the British Union Catalogue of Periodicals.

Inter change of staff involves the interchange of professional and sometimes non professional staff under specific arrangements worked out by cooperating libraries. Obaro (2008) supported the above assertion when she stated that professional staff are usually exchanged between libraries to either enhance their skills to tap from their abilities. She also stated that this phenomenon can take place locally within a nation or internationally between libraries.

The gains of resource sharing cannot be far-fetched for its helps to improve library services to the library user by broadening the base of information availability. It also provides the clientele with access to information

resource beyond the scope of their own libraries. It also enables libraries to avoid unnecessary duplication of materials thereby encouraging a wider patronage, (Okolo 2002:10). Altogether, it provides a wider access to collection, improves public and technical services, and enhances operations by sharing resources, reducing duplication and offering more cost effective services (Obaro,2010).

The challenges faced by resource sharing can be summarized thus; lack of poor basic communication, transportation and other infrastructural facilities, grossly inadequate funding, lack of government support, uncooperative attitude and policies on libraries, inadequate security of materials, lack of data on existing library resource, absence of formal agreements, physiological feeling of isolation from the mainstream of world wide library and information systems and networks,(Edoka, 2000, Obaro, 2008, Obaro, 2010).

Methods

The study is a descriptive research survey. The questionnaires, and interview methods, were used to obtain data for this study. The population of this study is made up of nineteen (19) senior library staff from each of the federal university libraries of south-south Nigeria. Four (4) federal university libraries were sampled for this study. The sampled institution libraries include: University of Uyo, Calabar, Benin, Port Harcourt. The federal university of petroleum resources, effurun and federal university, otuoke were not sampled due to the fact that their operations are quite skeletal because they were recently established.

The nineteen (19) senior library staff comprises the deputy university librarian, the various heads of departments and their assistants of Reference, cataloguing, classification, Reserve, Circulation, Collection development, special collections and Computer units. This will bring the total number of respondents to seventy

six (76): Thus seventy six questionnaires were distributed to the respondents by the researcher.

The entire copies of the questionnaire were retrieved. The nine (9) heads of the mentioned units in the different universities were each interviewed. The responses are analyzed using simple descriptive statistics. The interpretation and analysis are presented below using research questions

Research question one

Is Resource Sharing Practiced Among The Academic Libraries Of The Federal Universities In South-South Nigeria?

Resource sharing as was gathered is not fully practiced by the Academic libraries of the South-South Federal Universities in Nigeria. All the studied libraries claimed to practice it but in a skeletal form.

Resource sharing practice among respondents

UNIVERSITIES	RESPONSE	AT WHAT LEVEL
University of Benin	Yes	Skeletal level
University of Calabar	Yes	Skeletal level
University of Port-Harcourt	Yes	Skeletal level
University of Uyo	Yes	Skeletal level

Research question two

What are the Types of Resource Sharing Activities Practiced Among the academic libraries of the federal universities in South-South Nigeria?

Out of the existing six types of resource sharing activities studied, only two exists among the Academic libraries of Federal Universities in the South-South Nigeria, as illustrated below:

Types of resource sharing activities practiced

RESOURCE SHARING ACTIVITIES	University of Benin	University of Calabar	University of Port- Harcourt	University of Uyo
Inter library lending	No	Yes	yes	yes
Cooperative acquisition	No	No	No	No
Exchange of information	No	No	No	No
Inter library study facilities	Yes	Yes	yes	yes
Joint Publications	No	No	No	No
Interchange of staff	No	No	No	No

Cooperative acquisition, exchange of Information resources, Joint Publications and Interchange of Staff are non-existent in all the studied libraries

The Inter-library lending is not practiced in the University of Benin but University of Calabar, Port-Harcourt and Uyo, claimed to practice the Inter-

library lending, but on close observation, it was found out that it was practiced in skeletal levels.

From the interview conducted, the University of Uyo practiced inter-library lending only when they wanted the library accredited and stopped as soon as they achieved their purposes. The University of Port-Harcourt claimed to practice interlibrary lending with the two nearby higher institutions around it namely, College of Education and University of Science and Technology Port-Harcourt. These two are not viable because the College of Education is lower in status compared to a University; hence the College of Education is more at an advantage to the University. Similarly, the courses offered at University of Science and Technology Port-Harcourt varies from the courses offered at the University of Port-Harcourt. University of Calabar claims to be involved in Interlibrary lending but it was found out that this is only in paper and they are living on what can be called —past gloriesll. Close observations showed that this service is very skeletally practiced in these Universities.

In 1971, the courier service of Interlibrary lending was introduced which took the form of a trip to the University of Ibadan library through Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-ife. A library staff took off in a library van with requests to be met as well as documents to be returned. The trip was a weekly service and took 48 hours to complete. This was successful but ceased to operate over the years. In view of this, the Committee of University libraries of Nigerian Universities produced an arrangement for Inter-lending based on courier service. This plan linked the various Universities that were in existence in 1979 and one of the routes was:-

University of Ibadan → Obafemi Awolowo University lie-Ife →
University of Benin → University of Port-Harcourt →
University of Calabar → University of Nigeria, Enugu campus →

University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

The route involved the Federal Universities of the South-South Nigeria but as noted by Edoke (2000:145), —this positive plans for inter-lending have not yielded commensurate results, indeed the plans have remained on paperll and it is from this paper through interviews that these Universities are claiming to be involved in Inter-library lending. Also practiced by the four Universities is the Inter-library study facilities, both under-graduates, Post-graduates and the researchers of these Universities can conveniently exploit the resources of the libraries other than their own while on vacation or while carrying out a research. What is needed here is an identification letter from either their heads of departments, or the library of the parent institutions of the user.

Research question 3

What are the Gains of Resource Sharing Amongst Academic Libraries in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria.

From the interview conducted all respondents agreed that if resource sharing is fully practiced, it will guarantee a wider scope of accessing information materials and will also broaden the basis of Information availability of the users as illustrated below.

Benefits of resource sharing

BENEFITS	University Of Benin	University Of Calabar	University of Port-Harcourt	University Of Oyo
Improves a wider access to information	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Helps libraries avoid unnecessary duplication of materials	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Helps encourage wider patronage	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Enhances operations	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Research question four

What are the challenges faced during the course of Resource sharing by the Academic libraries in the Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria?

The main challenges as outlined by the respondents are largely on inadequate transportation, financial and infrastructural constraints. They cried out on the absence of funds to fuel their vans, require materials and to pay allowances for the driver and those that follow the van. Inadequate security of resources, lack of government support, lack of data on existing library resources, their collections and manpower, also absence of full automation in all the four studied Universities as represented in the data below:

Challenges of resource sharing among respondents

challenges	University of Benin	University of Calabar	University of Port-Harcourt	University of Uyo
Inadequate transportation	Yes	Yes	yes	yes

Infrastructural constraints	Yes	Yes	yes	yes
Absence of fund	yes	Yes	yes	yes
Inadequate securities of resources	yes	Yes	yes	yes
Lack of Government support	yes	Yes	yes	yes
Lack of data on existing library resources, collections and man power	yes	Yes	yes	yes
Absence of full automation of libraries	yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Conclusions

It can therefore be concluded that resource sharing activities are not practiced among the Academic libraries of the Federal Universities in South- South Nigeria. The following were recommended: for proper resource sharing activities among Academic libraries in some bonafide universities.

- 6) The Federal Government who owns these Universities should support them by funding and any other support they deem necessary.
- 7) All the libraries should be fully automated as this will help them have data on existing library resources of other libraries holdings.
- 8) There should also be an orientation exercise organized for users to enable them know what the libraries can do in resource sharing.
- 9) New vans/vehicles should be acquired for the libraries.
- 10) Trainings and retraining programmes should be organized for the library staff.
- 11) Security should be provided both for the vans and materials.
- 12) The courier service of interlibrary lending should be re-introduced for a sustainable educational development

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