

Library Services In The Hybrid Environment: A Case Study Of Research Institutes In Lagos State, Nigeria

by
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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to establish the desirability of hybrid collections and services by the research librarians in the four research institutes' libraries in Lagos state. Survey research method was employed; a total number of 25 questionnaires were distributed; and 20 were retrieved from which analyses were made. The study revealed high desirability of hybrid library by the research librarians. Also, lack of appropriate skills in managing electronic resources was discovered as the greatest impediment of providing hybrid services to support research.

Introduction

The term hybrid library is a reflection of the current disposition of information environment which is complex and comprises of print, online and offline information resources and services. The concept reflects the transitional state of the library, which today can neither be fully print nor fully digital but tries to use the technologies available to bring things together into a library reflecting the best of both worlds (Rusbridge, 1999). In the new information environment, appropriate range of heterogeneous information services is presented to the user in a consistent and integrated way via a single interface which may include local and/or remote distributed services (Pearce et al., 2000; Pinfield et al., 1998). A physical/traditional library deals primarily with physical data, while a digital library deals primarily with digital data. However, most modern libraries deal with both. A hybrid library is based within the physical but operates two services the physical and the digital and the Web being the environment of service and access to information. Today's modern library is not traditional any more but a transitional institution that rapidly melds new with old. The services are performed more on the Web where the users of information are, Web-based resources and services allow users to take their exploration further than they might be able to with print-based resources. This is because Web-based information system provides access to both the collections of the library and online access to electronic information which the library subscribes to single handedly or in consortia arrangement and a host of other information resources which allow researchers to do their research conveniently without visiting the library. Moreover, they can be sure that the materials they wish to use are available in the library before visiting the library for resources that are only in print format. The OPAC module provides public access to the library's collections through a single interface. Pearce et al. (2000) commented that for most libraries; the implementation of a Web-accessible catalogue has been the catalyst for creating a local hybrid library.

Thus, it has enabled the provision of a Web interface that allows the user to access to all kinds of information.

Hybrid libraries are common in the developed world unlike the developing economies where studies have shown to have a lot of challenges that are not allowing them to benefit from the provisions of the new information communication technologies. However, the new information environment requires that appropriate technologies be applied in the provision of information. Creating hybrid libraries is a starting point in curbing the digital divide which already exist between the developed and the developing countries of the world. Conducting research is a surest way of providing information on nations. But, this can only be visible if the researches are placed on the Web for wider visibility. In Nigeria, most of these researches are presented only in the print media. As a result they are not available to the generality of the populace let alone to the wider world. This study therefore, aims at sensitizing developing countries libraries on the need to provide hybrid information services to enhance research and development. The literature presents extensive findings of the need to utilize the benefits of both the physical library and the electronic/virtual/digital environments to satisfy the multi-dimensional nature of research.

Objectives of the study

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To find out whether the libraries maintain a hybrid collection.
2. To find out whether the libraries render hybrid library services.
3. To ascertain the librarians' perception of the hybrid library environment
4. To elicit information on the challenges of a hybrid library environment with a view to proffer appropriate solutions.

Background

Nigeria has relatively very large research infrastructures with the existence of over 93 universities and many research institutions. In 2005, Nigeria was ranked next to the least of the countries in the world with evidence of scientific research. The study observed that the Nigerian universities are not linking themselves (Agarin and Nwagwu 2006). It implies that resources available to more endowed universities which could have been used to harness knowledge by lesser endowed universities are unavailable, and then limit the level of awareness and contributions in areas of research and development being undertaken by these universities.

Gbaje (2007) as cited by Okiy (2008) reported that only 19 universities in Nigeria had websites with 10 of them having websites/pages dedicated to their libraries. Today, almost all the universities have websites but their libraries' presence in the sites is lacking. Research results of these institutions are hardly made available to other researchers outside the institutions. A lot of digitization is needed to be able to achieve integration and collaborations of research results in order to further research and development. A couple of Nigerian universities are currently engaged in one form of digitization or the other. Notably amongst them are six universities under the endowments of some foreign bodies – Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife; University of Jos and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria under the Carnegie Foundation while University of Ibadan, University of Port Harcourt and Bayero University are under MacArthur Foundation

The National Library of Nigeria started the digitization of the national newspapers but the database is still yet to be available online. Research libraries have as mandate to conduct research on their different areas of concerns and make available the results, but in most cases the results are available only to the users in these institutions. This is clearly because the research libraries operate mainly traditional library system that does not allow remote access to information.

Literature Review

The thinking of all - inclusive information systems and services has been pontificated by Pearce et al. (2000). According to them the only way to meet the information seekers' needs is to provide the user with access to both electronic and traditional information resources. This they opined is the hallmark of any modern quality library service.

The multi and interdisciplinary nature of research has necessitated the need for the availability of all kinds

of information resources. Lougee and Mackie (2008) cited Friedlander (2002) who observed that majority of students and faculty are using online library content, but they still desire a hybrid environment with both print and electronic collections. Also, the National Library of Australia Working Group identifies the need for research systems that would enable integrated access to numerous kinds of information.

The move towards the collaborative delivery of services, collections and facilities by traditional and virtual means in an increasingly seamless way would be our shared future (Robinson, 2002). The 'hybrid' research library of the twenty first century – particularly across the broad humanities – is fast becoming a reality and there is a growing convergence of research work through e-research which Luce (2008) described as 'a fundamental enabler of innovations and new discoveries... for the advancement of the social sciences and humanities as it already is in the sciences. Research libraries will need a lot of partnership with other organizations while focusing on their critical core competencies. This is very important as it is becoming difficult for nonprofit institutions to single handedly meet the ever-expanding needs of e-science.

Rader (2008) observed the incessant need of: prints, monographs, serials, documents, manuscripts, maps, photographs, archives, and related items for teaching, learning, and research by students, professors, and researchers". They also want "multi-media formats, such as films, slides, videos, digital videodisks (DVD), compact disks, tapes, and microfilms.

He concluded that librarians must ensure that they are capable of satisfying their users' diverse information needs and should therefore need to be experts in "evaluating electronic information and appropriate access mechanisms... to handle networking and computer infrastructure". Wittenberg (2008) argued that with:

a robust and stable information technology infrastructures, the research library is in a position to provide both the platform and many of the skills needed to enable the creation of new forms of scholarship and to disseminate the resulting content to a wider audience of users.

Malinconico (2002) commented on the importance of digital resources remarked that

.... it will need to coexist with very substantial holdings of information in traditional form – print on paper, microforms,....graphic objects, including photographs, pictures and maps, audio and sound recordings.

He added that both naïve and sophisticated library users are our clients, our patrons, the people we are committed to serving, so we must acknowledge their preferences, make attempt where it is feasible to satisfy. Okiy (2008: 6) observed that Nigerians are now:

Internet savvy, mostly due to their personal interest and efforts in using public Cyber-cafes to gain access to the Internet to seek information on a wide range of subjects and to sharpen their ICT skills Many students and scholars are changing from the traditional methods of sourcing for information in libraries to surfing the internet for current information.

Every library in the developed world has become Internet enabled in less than a decade (Lougee and MaCkie-Mason, 2008). The University of Ibadan has responded to the use of the World Wide Web (WWW) by passing a circular that all academic staff submits their publications and the links to them (Agarin and Nwagwu, 2006). They observed that UI is one of the earliest among Nigerian Universities to link to the Web. Kunneka (2004) observed that South African academic libraries model is a hybrid library where both print and advanced connectivity to worldwide full-text databases and library catalogs and resources, via interlending agreements and gateways to the Internet are available.

Larsen (2007) commented that the driving key at the moment is “to be visible and available where the users are on the www, and that younger generation of users prefers Chat via Instant Messaging than traditional Ask-a-Librarian type of e-mails services. Penny (1993) rightly observed that we are working in a time of transition, and one of its challenges is to be able to respond effectively to the traditional user as well as to the high-tech user. So, while continuing to acquire information from the traditional sources, research libraries in their bid to promote a research culture must exploit online technologies further (Webb, 1996). The new information culture is a hybrid of the new and the old.

The hybrid libraries need staff that is trained in helping patrons navigate the vast amount of information available in the digital age. Staff must have training in electronic media as well as the traditional print forms (Wikipedia). Luce (2008) pointed out the need for librarians to be ‘part of the research process – full members of the research team’. Research libraries will need to shift ‘focus from delivering products (e.g. reference services or publications) to process (e.g. supporting team science)’. Larsen (2007) was of the opinion that librarians should be qualified to offer high quality services to those users, who are visiting the physical library and also a substantial knowledge and skills needed for developing and maintaining electronic services and disseminating relevant services that match the Web-user’s needs and expectations. He therefore, proposed new skills in marketing, using chat software, co-browsing, communication via SMS and Web logs, writing to the Web and Web design. Sheila Corral, as quoted by Garrod (1999) argued that in the hybrid library of today, ‘Content Professionals’, who specialize in information handling as well as ‘Conduit Professionals’, who specialize in I.T. (Information Technology) and computing are needed.

Odhigba & Oshile (2006); Watts & Ibegbulam (2006) noted the general lack of infrastructures such as computers, network facilities like LAN, WAN – Internet, and also irregular supply of electricity as major hindrances to applying ICT to library services. Chisenga (2004) carried out a survey of the use of ICTs in ten African public libraries. Results revealed that most libraries had Internet connectivity but almost none offered Web-based information services to their users. Lack of funding, strategic planning, and consistent training for library users in the new ICT services remain problematic (Watts & Ibegbulam, 2006). The National Library of Nigeria at the moment is not connected to the Internet (Atueyi, 2009). John-Okeke (2008); Utulu (2007) observed the static nature of the Nigerian universities’ websites and concluded that it imposes a hindrance to wider access of information.

Methodology

The study adopts a total enumeration technique (census) in the investigation of hybrid library services and practices of the four research institutes in Lagos State, Nigeria. The choice of the population was also a purposive one in the light of the similar purpose of the establishment of the institutes which mainly hinged on the furtherance of research activities in specialized subjects such as agriculture, law, medicine and international relations. The choice of

the research institutes was also informed by the fact that findings will represent views from specialized group of information providers. Hence, copies of self developed questionnaires were administered to all the professional librarians working in the following research institutes:

- Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies
- Federal Institute of Industrial Research Oshodi
- Nigerian Institute of International Affairs
- Nigerian Institute of Medical Research

The data collected were analysed and interpreted using descriptive statistics. The reason for the small population (20) used for this research is that some of the research institutes studied are actually under staffed. Some have more clerical staff than research

Table I: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

<u>Gender</u>	Frequency	Percentage
Male	5	25
Female	15	75
Total	20	100
<u>Age Range</u>		
a. 36 - 40	5	25
b. 41 years and above	15	75
Total	20	100
<u>Educational Qualification</u>		
a. BLS	2	10
b. MLS	12	60
c. Ph.D	1	5
d. Others	5	25
Total	20	100
<u>Work Experience</u>		
a. 1-5 years	1	5
b. 6-10 years	6	30
c. 11-15 years	1	5
d. 16-20 years	4	20
e. 21 years and above	8	40
Total	20	100
<u>Job Titles/Designation</u>		
a. Research Librarian	5	25
b. Law Librarian	6	30
c. Medical Librarian	3	15
d. Information Manager	1	5
e. Special Librarian	1	5
f. Knowledge Manager	0	0
g. Others	4	20
Total	20	100

librarians. The non-research librarians surveyed were those who have long service and as such experienced on the job. More so, some of the staff were on leave at the time of the study.

Findings

A total number of 25 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and 80 per cent (20) were returned. Analyses were made based on the coded data. A majority of them 75 per cent were females and 25 per cent males; 75 per cent were 41years and above; 60 per cent representing (12) respondents possessed MLS degree; and 40 per cent (8) have worked for 21 years and above while the respondents bear varying job titles/designations with that of ‘Law Librarian’ taking the lead 30 percent (6) as shown in

Table I.

The respondents were asked to indicate the resources available in their libraries. As shown in **Table II**, Books/Journals (100 per cent, 20) were the most available resources in the libraries, followed by CD-ROMs (75 per cent, 15); and Audio-Visuals (60 per cent, 12) and Electronic Databases (55 per cent, 11). The least was E-Books and E-Journals (40 per cent, 8).

The respondents were also asked to indicate the various services rendered in their libraries. Sit-in and reading facilities (100 per cent, 20); traditional SDI and CAS services (75 per cent, 15); Online SDI/CAS services (20 per cent, 4); Manual Catalogues (65 per cent, 13); Online Public Access Catalogues (25 per cent, 5). Web-based/Online access services (5 per cent, 1) was the least of the services offered as presented in **Table III**.

The respondents were asked to indicate their perception on hybrid library collections and services

as presented in **Table IV**. A majority of the respondents 85 per cent (17) preferred hybrid collections and services for their libraries and 15 per cent (3) preferred a total electronic library collections and services. The reasons given for the preference of a hybrid library environment were that:

- It increases accessibility to library resources
- It increases visibility of the library
- It promotes multicultural research
- It encourages resource sharing
- Availability of resources in both ways
- A total electronic collection is very costly
- Power supply is not constant (for total electronic services)
- Print resources are still necessary
- Digitalization is gradual

Table II: Types of resources available

Types of resources	No. of responses	Percentage of responses
a. Books/Journals	20	100
b. CD-ROMS	15	75
c. Audio-Visuals	12	60
d. Electronic Databases	11	55
e. E-Books & E-Journals	8	40

Table III: Services rendered

Services	Responses	Percentage
a. Sit-in & reading facilities	20	100
b. Traditional SDI and CAS Services	15	75
c. Borrowing and lending of books/journals	13	65
d. Manual catalogues	14	70
e. Internet services	5	25
f. Electronic database searches	12	60
g. Online Public Access Catalogues	1	5
h. Online SDI and CAS services	10	50
i. Web-based/ Online access	4	20

Table IV: Perception of hybrid library

Responses	Yes	No
Preference to hybrid collections and services	17 (85%)	3 (15%)

Table V: Hindrances to hybrid environment

Hindrances	Responses	Percentage
a. Inadequate skill/ training in the management of hybrid library	18	90
b. Lack of funds		
c. Lack of the awareness of the advantages of a hybrid library	16	80
d. Satisfaction with total traditional librarianship	11	55
e. Satisfaction with total electronic library	4	20
	10	50

The responses from **Table V** revealed inadequate skill/training (90 per cent, 18) as the greatest impediment to hybrid library development in the institutions, followed by lack of funds (80 per cent, 16) and lack of awareness of the advantages of a hybrid library (55 per cent, 11). Poor infrastructural facilities and inadequate networking systems were also among problems facing the libraries in their efforts to provide hybrid services.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study reveals that most research institutes in Lagos State still operate mainly the traditional library service system. The study however establishes the desirability of the hybrid library system barring some identified obstacles with the greatest being inadequate skills followed by funding. In order to build a viable hybrid library in Nigeria, a local hybrid library system is needed to integrate all the research institutes in the state/country. Each academic and research institution need to maintain an institutional repository which represents a scholarly communication model where researchers are mandated to submit their research/seminar papers in an electronic format which will later be uploaded to the institutes' websites and then be made accessible to researchers inside and outside the host institutions. Efforts towards digitization should be made. Government funding like: the US Digital Libraries Initiatives (DLI, funded by three agencies of the USA Federal Government – the National Science Foundation, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, and the National Aeronautics and space Administration, NSF/DARPA/NASA) and the UK Electronic Libraries Program (eLib) by JISC are highly desirable.

Partnership with corporate organizations like MTN Connect - which is currently supporting universities in Nigeria, should also be sought for. Also, the formation of consortia amongst libraries of similar interests is highly needed. Lack of skills in managing web access has been shown to be the greatest impediment to providing hybrid services, it therefore

follows that research librarians require consistent training to equip them with the skills that are needed. Also, a lot of collaborations with IT staff and academics in the various institutions should be encouraged.

Finally, the government which remains the largest stakeholder in educational funding needs to reappraise its commitment towards a better funding of institutions libraries, while the institutions should look inwards for other funding avenues to supplement government efforts.

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