



Library Cooperation as a Precursor to Enhanced Library Services Provision in Academic Libraries in Imo State.

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Abstract: Purpose: The study investigated library cooperation and provision of library services in academic libraries in Imo State.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Survey design was adopted in carrying out this study. The 180 professional and para-professional staff in the six (6) tertiary institutions' libraries which include Imo State University library, Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Imo Polytechnic, Federal College of Land Resources and Technology and Federal University of Technology, Owerri. Total enumeration sampling procedure was employed to take complete count of the population.

Findings: Findings of the study revealed that interlibrary loan, exchange and joint publication constitute the few areas of library cooperation in the tertiary institutions studied; and there is significant relationship between library cooperation and provision of library services in the tertiary institutions studied whereas inadequate funding, outdated technology and fear of loss of resources are some of the challenges posed by library cooperation.

Originality/Value: The study provides empirical justification for the effectiveness of library cooperation on quality service delivery.

Keywords: Academic libraries, Library cooperation, Library services, Imo State

Introduction

Academic libraries are structured for the main purpose of rendering effective services to users. Opara (2001) in his work stated that some library users are unaware of the Current Awareness Services (CAS), Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), charging and discharging of books, and many others. Some libraries go into a form of cooperation with other libraries. Libraries have, for decades, organized themselves into consortia as a means of broadening the services they provide to their users which would otherwise be unaffordable to any individual library.

wide range of services academic libraries offer and therefore do not avail themselves of the great opportunity to use them. Libraries render various services like user education, reprographic, reference services,

when they cannot render some services effectively. According to Edoke (2000), library co-operation is the voluntary action of two or more libraries to achieve the desired goal.

Libraries of all sizes and types create cooperation to leverage the resources of all their members. Since no library is self sufficient, there must have to be a partnership with other libraries in other to

timely meet the information needs of users. Some of the advantages of library cooperation according to Kumar (2014) include; providing each institution with the ability to share resources without sacrificing the individuality to each member library, access to wider number of electronic resources at substantially lower cost using consortia-based subscription to electronic resources, enhancing library services with an emphasis on access to new electronic resources including databases and services offered through the internet and world wide web, better delivery services, better understanding of copyright laws.

Libraries can cooperate in various areas of their functions. Manu-Kumar (2013) affirmed that libraries could cooperate in area such as inter-library loan, cooperative acquisition, specialized purchasing programs, centralized processing, shared cataloguing, sharing of bibliographical data, centralized periodical collection for loan purposes, cooperative microfilming, preparation and maintenance of union catalogue and union list of serials, exchange of publications. Libraries can only cooperate when there are human resources. Co-operating in all the areas of librarianship mentioned earlier, the library has a lot to gain from library co-operation.

Library co-operation also has some challenges of its own. According to Edoke (2000), some of the disadvantages of library co-operation are; lack of basic communication, transport and other infrastructural facilities, grossly inadequate funding, lack of government support, inadequate security of materials, uncooperative attitudes and policies on libraries, lack of data on the existing library resources, their collections, manpower etc, absence of formal agreements, psychological feeling isolation from the

mainstream of worldwide library and information systems and networks. To Manu-Kumar (2013), some of the barriers of library cooperation include; inadequate funding, limited personnel, outdated technology, lack of standards, insufficient knowledge, fear of loss, copyright issues, negative attitudes and, no tradition of cooperation or reluctance to participate.

Statement of the Problem

The library is the pivot around teaching and learning. For the library to continue maintaining its integrity, it must always be able to meet the information needs of users, and this can only be done through acquiring volumes of information resources which covers every area of the curriculum of the parent institution. Regrettably, it is impossible for a library to be self-sufficient considering the rapid growth of information, information resources and the dwindling book vote. It is impossible for any library to keep up with the number of publications around the world daily which are very necessary for teaching and research. Library cooperation becomes a solution to the challenge. Quality services cannot be delivered to patrons in the absence of quality information resources which no library can claim sufficiency of. This study was undertaken to establish if a relationship exists between library cooperation and patrons-focused services in tertiary institutions in Imo State.

Objectives of the Study

The study examined Library Cooperation as a precursor to enhanced library services provision in academic libraries in Imo State. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. ascertain the types of library cooperation that exist in academic libraries in Imo State.

2. determine the extent of library services provision in academic libraries.
3. identify the challenges associated with library cooperation in academic libraries in Imo State.

Research Questions

The following questions were posed for the study:

1. What are the types of cooperation that exist in academic libraries in Imo State?
2. To what extent are library services provided in the academic libraries?
3. What are the challenges of library cooperation in academic libraries in Imo State?

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho₁ There is no significant relationship between library cooperation and provision of library services in the libraries studied.

Literature Review

The practice of lending and borrowing materials occurred as far back as the 8th century in Western Europe. According to IFLANET (2006), during the Middle Ages, monasteries were renowned for their manuscript collections: *Clastrum sine armario, castrum sine armamentario* (A monastery without a library is like a castle without an armory). Extensive borrowing and lending occurred among monasteries and convents during this time and thousands of monks and nuns across Christian Europe transcribed continually. Books exceedingly outnumbered the relatively small number of scholars and readers who desired them. The rising demand for manuscripts led to an

increase in production. In turn, catalogs became more common and more complex. The first known formal, alphabetical catalog in Western Europe was created in the 12th century.

In Nigeria, according to Nwalo (2003), the history of library cooperation is traced to the meeting of the Working Group on inter-library lending held in 1974 in the instance of the National Library of Nigeria. The subsequent conference on cooperative acquisition held in Kaduna in 1980 resulted to the National Union Catalogue (NUC) and the National Union of Serials (NULOS) project. In 2004 the Committee of University Librarians of Nigerian Universities (CULNU) formed the Nigerian University Library Consortium (NULIC) to embrace all universities with the view to expanding it to include all academic and research libraries in Nigeria. Some of the objectives include:

- Promote resource sharing among member libraries
- Make the academic resources of each member library available to all others
- Ensure that member institutions contribute meaningfully towards sustaining the consortium etc.

In modern times, library cooperation is receiving increasing attention from librarians, information scientists and other interested parties. Therefore, there is need for library cooperation. Allen (2012) indicated that interlibrary lending involves borrowing of a needed information material from one library to another. Ejedafiru (2011) agreed that there is no way a single library can satisfy the demands of its users. But when libraries cooperate and make their resources accessible to one and another, we see results. The justification for resources

sharing is hinged on the fact that no library, however large, could be completely self-sufficient.

On the reasons for cooperation, Muthu (2013) listed them to include: information explosion and no library is self-sufficient, language barrier & limitation in fund, diversity in users need, increase in user population and quality of library service, increasing trend of new born subjects and specialization, increase in the number of members of user community teachers, scholars and students in universities and lack of environment to make use of available computer and communication technology for efficient and production use in libraries among others.

The areas libraries cooperate vary depending on the type, goal and mission of the libraries. Agboola (2003) included the following areas of library cooperation: cooperative storage scheme, inter-library lending, transfer of materials, national library facilities, inter-library study facilities, local and regional cooperation, cooperative acquisition scheme. According to Encyclopedia of Librarianship (2003), it is the production of catalogue entries or printed book catalogue through joint action of several independent libraries so that each library and usually other non-cooperating libraries as well, may share the benefits of such cataloguing. Edoka (2000) was of the view that areas of library cooperation include; cooperative acquisition, exchange of information materials, interlibrary study facilities, joint publication, inter-change of staff. Iheanacho (2006) revealed some other forms of cooperation in academic libraries like cooperative acquisition, joint publication, referred cooperation, exchange of staff and resource sharing. Muoh (2012) discovered that resource sharing mostly embarked on are basically referral services,

serials exchange and exchange of library resources.

The ultimate desire of any library is to meet the information needs of the staff, students, host community and the global community at large. This is achieved through the provision of various services. Sokari, Abdullahi and Abdullahi (2017) enumerated some of the library functions as; Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), Circulation services, serials services, Current Awareness Services (CAS), consultancy services, Photocopy services, interlibrary loan services, binding services, internet services among other services of the university library. Edom (2012) and Okorie (2016) added to the above by including library services like user education, library orientation, lending services, book reservation services, referral services and book display services. Obi (2013) listed user education, circulation and reference services as part of the library services provided by the library staff to the library users.

Interlibrary cooperation in one way or the other affects the provision of library services. Sokari, Abdullahi and Abdullahi (2017) discovered that library services such as Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), Circulation services, serials services, Current Awareness Services (CAS), consultancy services etc. are enhanced through library cooperation and sharing. Edom (2012) and Okorie (2016) lent their voices by asserting that library services like user education, library orientation, lending services are spread through the cooperation of libraries.

Sridhar (2012) asserted that some of the challenges of library cooperation in academic libraries include; Local self-sufficiency goals and 'ownership paradigm', competitiveness of institutions and convert move for centralization, Autonomy of

actions desired by librarians, size and status consciousness of established libraries, difficulties in arriving at mutually agreeable collecting responsibilities without adversely affecting the growth rate of participating libraries, urgency of user requirements, psychological and egoistic barriers by users, librarians and staff, discouragement from past experiences, traditional/ institutional rules which include idiosyncratic rules, procedures, regulations and decisions of institutions, inability to satisfy local needs, special rules, institutional competition, funding problems etc.

Zulu (2015) in his own study, identified lack of awareness and sensitization on the importance of resource sharing among libraries and limited education and training among librarians as forms of obstacles to effective resource sharing. However, Iheanacho (2006) and Chisita (2016) in their research works identified inadequate funding as the major factor hindering effective library cooperation in academic libraries. Other challenges they identified include poor communication, bad road network, and inadequate information materials. Muoh (2012) also identified problems such as finance, non-availability of resource to share, lack of professional staff to coordinate the venture and poor communication.

Research Methodology

Survey design was adopted in carrying out this study. The 180 professional and para-professional staff in the six (6) tertiary institutions' libraries studied

constituted the population of the study. This is made up 25 staff of Imo State University library, 20 staff of Federal Polytechnic Nekede library, 39 staff of Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education library, 10 staff of Imo Polytechnic library, 5 staff of Federal College of Land Resources and Technology library and 81 staff of Federal University of Technology, Owerri library. Since the population was relatively small, total enumeration sampling technique was adopted. The instrument for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire. The instrument for this study was validated by two specialists: one from the Department of Library and Information Science, Imo State University, Owerri and the other by a specialist in Measurement and Evaluation in the Faculty of Education, Imo State University. It was measured on a 4-point likert scale. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha, which yielded alpha value of 0.70. Data collected for the study, was analysed using descriptive statistical tools like tables, frequency and mean. Decisions were based on 2.50 criterion mean while the hypothesis was tested using t-test.

Data Analyses

Research Question One: What are the types of cooperation that exist in academic libraries in Imo State?

Table 1: Types of Library Cooperation Existing in Academic Libraries Studied

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1.	Cooperative cataloguing	56	23	75	26	2.48	Disagree
2.	Exchange	45	88	20	27	2.84	Agree
3.	Inter-library loan	55	19	64	42	2.61	Agree
4.	Cooperative acquisition	22	25	80	53	2.09	Disagree

5.	Interchange of staff	13	46	87	34	2.21	Disagree
6.	Joint publication	79	66	21	14	3.17	Agree
7.	Cooperative storage	20	46	80	34	2.29	Disagree
Weighted Mean						2.53	

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

***Decision arrived at using 2.50 criterion mean*

Responses from Table 1 above shows the mean responses on the types of library cooperation that exists among the academic libraries studied. We can observe that interlibrary loan, exchange and joint publication have positive mean values of 2.61, 2.84 and 3.17 respectively hence we

conclude that they have facilitated library cooperation. However, the respondents were of the view that other library cooperation indices like cooperative cataloguing, cooperative acquisition, interchange of staff and cooperative storage are not being practiced in the libraries since they have negative mean values.

Research Question Two: To what extent are library services provided in the academic libraries?

Table 2: Extent of Provision of Library Services

S/N	Items	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean	Decision
1.	User Education	83	81	11	5	3.34	High Extent
2.	Reference Service	65	78	18	19	3.05	High Extent
3.	Circulation Services	89	55	21	15	3.21	High Extent
4.	Reprographic Services	77	53	20	30	2.98	High Extent
5.	Internet Services	73	84	9	14	3.20	High Extent
6.	Current Awareness Services (CAS)	76	51	29	24	2.99	High Extent
7.	Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI)	65	48	31	36	2.79	High Extent
Weighted Mean						3.08	

VHE = Very High Extent, HE = High Extent, LE = Low Extent, VLE = Very Low Extent

***Decision arrived at using 2.50 criterion mean*

The Table 2 above shows the mean responses on the extent library services are provided in the academic libraries. The mean values for all the question items are positive which indicates that the library services are provided to a high extent. User education, reference services, circulation

and reprographic services, internet services, CAS and SDI services are some of the library services that are provided in the libraries. The grand mean value of 3.08 shows a high extent of provision of library services.

Research Question Three: What are the challenges of library cooperation in academic libraries in Imo State?

Table 3: Challenges Faced by Libraries in Library Cooperation

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1.	Inadequate funding	76	65	24	15	3.12	Agree

2.	Limited personnel	15	38	68	59	2.05	Disagree
3.	Outdated technology	51	67	34	28	2.78	Agree
4.	Fear of loss	47	45	40	48	2.51	Agree
5.	Lack of awareness and understanding	23	44	49	64	2.14	Disagree
6.	Speed of decision making	23	20	86	51	2.08	Disagree
7.	Lack of leadership	45	18	61	56	2.29	Disagree
Weighted Mean						2.43	

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

***Decision arrived at using 2.50 criterion mean*

According to the mean responses from Table 3 above, inadequate funding, outdated technology and fear of loss are the three main challenges facing effective library cooperation. The mean values of question items 1, 3 and 4 gave positive outcomes. However, the negative mean values of question items 2, 5, 6 and 7 indicates that limited personnel, lack of awareness, speed of decision making and lack of leadership

are not problems faced by libraries in their quest to cooperate with other libraries. Conclusively, the grand mean value of 2.43 shows that library cooperation faces little or no threat or challenges based on the responses from the academic staff of the libraries studied.

H₀₁ There is no significant relationship between library cooperation and provision of library services in the libraries studied.

Table 4: Correlation between Library Cooperation and Provision of Library Services in the Libraries Studied.

Variable	N	X	S	t _{cal}	p-value	t _{Crit}	Pearson r	Decision
LIB_COP	180	18.96	0.821					
				-4.405	0.002	1.960	0.852	Reject H ₀₁
LIB_SERVICES	180	21.25	3.728					

Decision Rule: Since the t-calculated value of 4.405 is greater than the t-tabulated value 1.960 at 5% level of significance, and the p-value is less than the 0.05 critical value, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is significant relationship between library cooperation and provision of library services in the libraries studied. The correlation coefficient (Pearson “r”) 0.852 indicates that library cooperation enhances the provision of library services by 0.85 which is rated as “very high relationship” since it falls between 0.81 and 1.00; In other words, 0.85 of library services are facilitated by library cooperation.

Discussion of Findings

The types of cooperation that exist in the academic libraries studied were identified as interlibrary loan, exchange programmes and joint publications. Their positive mean values showed that they have facilitated library cooperation. However, the respondents were of the view that other library cooperation indices like cooperative cataloguing, cooperative acquisition, interchange of staff and cooperative storage are not being practiced in the libraries frequently. The study of Iheanacho (2006) revealed some forms of cooperation in academic libraries like cooperative acquisition, joint publication, referred cooperation, exchange of staff and resource sharing. Muoh (2012) discovered that resource sharing mostly embarked on are

basically referral services, serials exchange and exchange of library resources. This finding does not agree with the finding of this study.

The analysis found that cooperation in the academic libraries studied have helped the library services to a very high extent. Services such as user education, reference services, circulation and reprographic services, internet services, CAS and SDI services are the basic library services that are enhanced with the cooperation of libraries. The correlation coefficient indicated that library cooperation enhances the provision of basic library services by 85% hence we found a significant relationship between library cooperation and provision of basic library services. This finding agrees with Sokari, Abdullahi & Abdullahi (2017) who in their study found that library services such as; Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), Circulation services, serials services, Current Awareness Services (CAS), consultancy services etc. are enhanced through library cooperation and sharing. This finding also supports Edom (2012) and Okorie (2016) who asserted that library services like user education, library orientation, lending services are spread through the cooperation of libraries.

According to the responses from the tertiary institutions studied, inadequate funding, outdated technology and fear of loss are the three main challenges facing the effectiveness of library cooperation. Outdated equipments cannot be exchanged since they are of little or no value to contemporary libraries. Also, inadequate funding makes libraries to be handicapped in exchanging information resources with other libraries and the fear of loss limits the ability of funded libraries to accede to cooperation services in respect of expensive information resources. These in effect pose serious

challenge to library cooperation. Zulu (2015) identified lack of awareness and sensitization on the importance of resource sharing among libraries and limited education and training among librarians as forms of obstacles to effective resource sharing. These challenges are not prevalent according to our finding in this research work and the reason for this difference is mainly due to the conduct of both research in two different climes i.e. in Zambia and this one is in Nigeria. However, Iheanacho (2006) and Chisita (2016) in their research work identified inadequate funding as the major factor hindering effective library cooperation in academic libraries. Other challenges they identified include poor communication, bad road network, and inadequate information materials. Muoh (2012) also identified problems such as finance, non-availability of resource to share, lack of professional staff to coordinate the venture and poor communication.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The library is a service-oriented institution. Efficient services can only be achieved with quality library resources. It is a well known fact no library is self-sufficient, hence there is tendency that libraries need to rely on one another to achieve their goals. This study discovered that there is a relationship between library services provided and library cooperation despite the challenges. Libraries need to embrace library cooperation as it will go a long way in helping them render quality services to the library patrons. Based on the research findings and conclusion drawn, the following recommendations are made:

1. Other areas that the libraries are not cooperating should be encouraged such as cooperative acquisition, cataloguing and exchange of staff among others.

2. The extent of provision of library services should be sustained and every effort made to improve on what is existing.
3. There should be a special fund for the revitalization of libraries in our tertiary institutions. The issue of inadequate funding remains a serious challenge and this step will help to make funds available on demand for the effective engagement in library cooperation.

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