

## RESOURCE SHARING AMONG LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

Bappah Magaji Abubakar\*

### ABSTRACT

*ICT is transforming world society into an important force to reckon with and the activities are taking a center stage in all spheres of human endeavours, inclusive of libraries. With this backdrop, the paper attempts to discuss the concept of resource sharing activities and the historical development of it in Nigeria with Justification especially in the digital age. The paper analyses the major challenges as shield or barrier to a more vibrant activities in Nigeria for its underdeveloped infrastructure and consequences thereof. It brings out some suggestions for improvement.*

### KEYWORDS

*Resource Sharing- Nigeria, Resource Sharing- Digital Age, Libraries –Resource Sharing*

### INTRODUCTION

Resource sharing activities have always been one of the most important obligations of libraries world wide. This being so that no library can ever be self-sufficient or boast of having all the required resource for its users. The basic function as a dynamic institution is the provision of adequate resources and the matching of those resources with the needs of its users. However, effective delivery of the library functions requires the services of competent library staff as well as the

---

\* Bappah Magaji Abubakar Lecturer Department of Library and Information Science, Bayero University, Kano –Nigeria E-MAIL: amkwaru4@yahoo.com GSM: +234 803-5962323

provision of relevant facilities to ensure the success and achievement of the set objectives of the library.

Generally resource sharing, library networking and library cooperation are used interchangeably in the digital age to mean sharing of resource of a library with the users of other libraries. According to **Odini (1991)** resource sharing is the process whereby the resource of a group of network libraries is made available to the sum total of the persons entitled to use any of those libraries. Resource sharing is a wide phrase embracing library cooperation, library systems, and networking. It is an omnibus expression to cover cooperation, coordination, interlibrary loans, cooperative acquisition, cooperative storage and processing. Similarly to **Blakes (2006)** resource sharing in the digital age "comprises of transactions which a library makes of its materials available to the clientele of another library upon request". The Encyclopaedia of Library and Information Science equally consider resource sharing as a mode of operations whereby library functions are shared in common by a number of libraries, the goal being to provide a positive net effect on: (a) the library user in terms of access to more materials or services (b) the library budget in terms of cost, or much more service at less cost than if undertaken individually. (**Kent, 1968**)

Resource sharing activities among libraries brings about cooperative efforts and ensures that materials not available in a library are obtained or requested from another library. In the digital age, resource sharing activities are practised with the application of information and communication technology (ICT) which now permeates all sectors of life and takes a center stage of all of our activities. Many writers, however, view that resource sharing in the digital era can be conveniently undertaken with an operational digital library.

### **DIGITAL AGE**

**Katsina (2005)** sees a digital library as a library that has materials stored in a computer system in a form that allows it to be manipulated

for improved retrieval and delivery (e.g. as a sound file) in ways that conventional version of the materials cannot be.

Interestingly however, in this digital age, the flow of information is on the increase which dramatically changes the way and manner the clientele seeks for information. Librarians must therefore be aware of this change and prepare for the challenges before them. **Adesanya (2002)** is of the view that IT has provided new techniques for information management amongst which is creation of computer databases; On-line information retrieval, development of optical disc devices (CD-ROM) and the Internet. In order to disseminate information efficiently and effectively to users in era of information explosion the basic essential technologies should be applied to information management.

The place of libraries and librarians is dramatically changing in this digital age. **Usman (2006)** consider Online computer library catalog (OCLC) as a model in the evolution of resource sharing in the digital age. He stresses further that “ OCLC grew from a regional cooperative network in the state of Ohio, United State of America to a National Network in the USA, and further grew to what is now an International Network of over 23,000 libraries and information centers in sixty three (63) countries and territories.

Many new approaches to resource sharing are now emerging world wide which include the use of the Internet for accessing millions of bits of Information all over the globe, the electronic mail, teleconferencing and video conferencing. Some of the modern technologies for resource sharing in the digital age as highlighted by **Oyegade (2000)** are as :

### **Internet**

The Internet -world wide Network of computers comprising of thousands of regional networks scattered throughout the world

connects over one hundred million users daily. It facilitates resource sharing and collaboration at both local and global levels. The other services available via the Internet like World Wide Web, electronic mailing, interactive conferences, access to information resource, news groups, file transfer prove as the gateway to the global information and help to share resources.

### **Online Catalogues**

Online catalogues have made access easy. Library automation softwares have reduced the drudgery from shifting through card catalogues and other conventional bibliographic guides. The catalogue being a tool of resource sharing help to put on hands on resources conveniently.

### **Databases**

Many categories of Databases being available provide a vast array of information, both bibliographic as well as full text , regarding the information resources ( journal articles, theses, books, government publications etc). These easily facilitate resource sharing activities at different levels.

### **On-line Searching**

The database for online searching could be accessed from a far local work station or sourced locally on a CD-ROM drive directly connected to the computer. The interaction in online searching is fully conversational and the computer or the CD-ROM software responds immediately to questions or commands followed by further enquiries. It makes it more time saving activity for the scholars and professionals.

### **NEED**

The importance of resource sharing in libraries cannot be over emphasized. Indeed, it allows libraries and their users to access a very

wide variety of resource as well as other services they could not have otherwise been provided or have access to. **Usman (2006)** observed that the need for the sharing of resource stems from three underlying trends of a modern society: the growth of all forms of literature, the increasing reliance on information to enable society function effectively, and the increasing availability of technology. Libraries and information centers have for many years considered resource sharing and cooperation as a major way of fulfilling these obligations. **Speirs (2006)** noted that "if librarians are truly charged with creating, finding, evaluating, managing and disseminating information, reaching out and exchanging information with others is equally essential if they have to keep up with developments. Besides, the desire for ensuring economy in the operations of libraries has always been one of the most important reasons and that is why libraries must share their resources for the benefit of their clients worldwide.

### RESOURCE SHARING IN NIGERIA

Resource sharing programmes so far undertaken at the national level include inter-library lending, union catalogue and cooperative acquisition. Historically, the idea of having a national union catalogue in Nigeria was introduced in 1963 by the National Library of Nigeria. **Ubogu (1992)** stated that eighty five (85) libraries participated in the programme. Each participating library sent a copy of the main entry catalogue card of its holdings to the National Library. The National Library of Nigeria maintains the cards in cabinet trays.

While on the other hand the National Union List of Serials (NULOS) which is part of the National Union Catalogue was introduced in 1977. It includes list of record of serial titles held by the participating libraries in the Library Cooperation Programme. It was also compiled by the National Library of Nigeria. However, the history of inter-library lending in Nigeria can be traced back to 1974 after the meeting of the inter-library lending committee, held at Ile-Ife. The meeting recommended that a National Bibliographic Center be formed and a

standard form be designed for use both for the national and international services.

Later, cooperative acquisition in Nigeria came about as a result of a conference organized by the National Library which was held at Kaduna in 1980. Much progress was not achieved for the programme is still at the planning stage. Besides, various Inter-library programmes are in vogue in Universities and some special libraries of Nigeria reporting sharing of information resource among themselves.

### PRESENT STAGE

Despite the dramatic changes in computers and communication technologies, world wide, the status of resource sharing activities in Nigeria is still in infancy. There is not any formal agreement on the part of libraries to cooperate in services in contrary to developments in the advanced countries. **Oke (1977)** opines that "inter-library cooperation is not alien to Nigerian libraries, most have ideas about what could be done but no machinery has been put to work to ensure a formal and cooperative action."

Besides, the Nigerian Government does not seem to have any regard or value to information as a necessary ingredient for the survival of nation. This of course is very inimical to the development of library and information services in a country considered to be the most populous in Africa. **Ubogu (1992)** equally notes that "beyond establishing the National Library and funding of the various existing libraries through their parent organizations, the Federal Government has not seen information as a national resource. There is as yet no encouragement for institutions to share resource through cooperative arrangements. That notwithstanding, library resources have continued to be shared mainly through informal cooperative arrangement among libraries.

However, despite the afore mentioned issues, several cooperative projects have been introduced e.g. the Nigeria Periodical Index (NPI), a cooperative indexing project initiated by the committee of University librarians of Nigeria Universities (CULNU), and the National Documentation and Library Center for Science and Technology (NADICEST) which aims at providing accessibility to current and retrospective information on science and technology in the country.

## **PROBLEMS**

It is clear that resource sharing activities have a significant role in African countries especially in Nigeria. However, most libraries in Nigeria face many constraints in their efforts for sharing resource. The factors are: corruption, mismanagement of resources, inflation which has eaten deep and negligence of libraries and allied institutions. Although very rich in natural resource, Nigeria has been ranked as one of the most backward nations in the world.

Financial support for most libraries in Nigeria has always been on decline. In fact, barely enough to pay for staff salaries. This unfortunate situation has drastically affected all aspects of library and information services in the country. There is also the absence of effective national information infrastructures. **Blakes (2006)** corroborated this point by citing **Chisenga (2006)** who noted that "unfortunately, there is a general absence of viable National Information Infrastructure (NII) in most countries of Sub-Saharan Africa.

**Odi (1991)** also noted that most developing countries, Nigeria inclusive, lack data on the present library situation and this constitutes a serious obstacle to effective planning and resource sharing activities. Many countries do not know how many workers are employed in the libraries, at what levels, what their collections contain, or what use is made of them, how many users they have and what their needs are.

Other major problems include that of poor facilities for rapid communication among libraries which otherwise enhance resource sharing activities. Most Nigerian libraries find it difficult to acquire the latest ICTs such as computers, internet, as well as large network databases. In a situation whereby even the ICTs are provided, information technology literacy among Nigerian librarians is still at its lowest ebb. Finally, lack of standardization of bibliographic data records as well as other inconsistencies add to problems for resource sharing activities.

### **PROSPECTS AND SUGGESTIONS**

The success of any resource sharing activities in Nigeria can be achieved taking following suggestions into consideration:.

- There is the need to have a national body which will be responsible for planning resource sharing activities and its effective implementation. Such a body should comprise of the Nigerian Library Associations (NLA); other professional bodies as well as the National Library of Nigeria (NLN). The bodies have a very crucial role to play in bringing an acceptable nationwide resource sharing programme and activities.
- Improvement on information and communication technologies is very important. This is so because resource sharing activities are more meaningful with the use of latest ICTs, most especially when digitization process has become the hallmark of useful library.
- There must also be willingness on the part of Nigerian librarians to change their attitude and embrace the ICTs around. The various professional bodies e.g. the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) and others needs to put efforts to sensitize professionals by organising conferences and activate other forums for awareness drive on the importance of sharing of resource among libraries.
- That our libraries should also seek more financial assistance especially from other departments, organisations, NGOs etc. The



Nigerian Government must realize that information is a national resource that cannot be toyed with. The professionals can educate people in the corridors of power on the need of cooperation and networking for the use of the country.

- Finally, a dire need for the standardization of bibliographic data records is felt. The National Library must give priority to this for achieving meaningful development and success. This will in the long run help to develop international networking and resource sharing.

## CONCLUSION

This paper explores the crucial role of resource sharing programmes among libraries for sharing information resources bringing out the problems affecting the development of resource sharing activities in Nigeria, with suggestions. The community of users of these libraries will continuously have access to a wide variety of information of their choice. The challenge before our professionals and professional associations is to see that the country build a functional network in order to ensure that information resources in the country are easily available to those who need them.

## REFERENCES

- Adesanya, O. (2002). The impact of information technology on information dissemination. In E.C. Madu, and M. B. Dirisu. (Eds). *Information science and technology for library schools in Africa*. Ibadan. Evi: Colman Publications.
- Blakes, E. F. (2006). *ICT availability and resource sharing in some academic libraries in Nigeria*. Paper presented at the NLA conference at Abuja

- Katsina, M. N. (2005). *Contemporary ICTs and the theory and practice of librarianship*. Paper presented at the Professor Abdullahi Mohammed Memorial Lecture Hall at Kano.
- Kent, A. (Ed) (1968). *Encyclopaedia of Library and Information Science*, (vol. 8). New York: Marcel Dekker.
- Odini, C. (1991). Problems and prospects of resource sharing in developing Countries. *African Journal of Library, Archives and Information science*, 1(2), 93.
- Oke, J. S. (1977). *Building Library Resources through Cooperation*. Faculty of Education and Library Science Miscellaneous papers Zaria- Department of library science.
- Oyegade, E.A. (2000). *An overview of information technology in Nigerian public libraries*. Paper presented at the NALISE conference held at Ibadan: University of Ibadan.
- Speirs, M. (2006). *Resources sharing in the digital age*. Paper presented at the NLA conference held at Abuja, Nigeria
- Ubogu, F. N., et al. (1992). Library networks and resource sharing in Nigeria. *African Journal of library, archives and Information Science*, 2(2), 100-101
- Usman, I. (2006). *New Approaches in library resource sharing in the digital age*. Paper presented at the NLA conference held at Abuja.