

Chapter 73

Resource Sharing: Vehicle for Effective Library Information Dissemination and Services in The Digital Age

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ABSTRACT

The chapter examined resource sharing as vehicle for effective library information dissemination and services in the digital age. In relation to this purpose, studies have shown that the global information explosion, the cut in library budgetary allocations, the rising costs and complexities of information resources, as well as the need to provide the user community with optimal access to needed information make resource sharing initiatives indispensable particularly among academic libraries for effective information dissemination and service delivery in the digital age. However, certain questions remain unanswered in the literature regarding resource sharing. They include: How can libraries engage in effective dissemination of information to the clientele through resource sharing? How can resource sharing result to effective service delivery in academic library? Is there a reflection of resource sharing in Nigeria? What is the nature of resource sharing in this digital age? What does the future hold regarding resource sharing in academic libraries and what are the issues/challenges associated with resource sharing by academic libraries in the digital age? It is expected that this chapter will provide answers to all these pertinent questions.

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INTRODUCTION

Consequent on the ongoing economic recession and the increasing cost of information resources, libraries irrespective of their types find it difficult to acquire all the documents and information materials necessary to be available in the library for the users. This implies that no library is capable of satisfying all the needs of its clientele. It is on this note that (Zulu, 2015) posited that no library is self-sufficient and the possibility and feasibility of any library irrespective of its size to be self-reliant in terms of collection is doubtful. Libraries in Nigeria are not exempted from this. To rescue themselves from this situation, libraries therefore have developed a way to improve their services to the users by widening the base of information availability through sharing of resources. Sharing of library resources which is an aspect of inter library cooperation means that one library uses the resources of their libraries and vice versa.

In the literature, a group of libraries working together in cooperation for common purpose of material benefit is termed resource sharing system. Resource sharing encompasses a wide range of physical, intellectual and conceptual resource on the one hand and a body of people with library and information needs on the other hand. The terms ‘resource sharing’ ‘library cooperation’, ‘library networking’, ‘library linkages’, ‘library collaboration’, ‘library consortia’, ‘interlibrary loan’, ‘document supply’, ‘document delivery’, ‘access services’, are used interchangeably to describe formal and informal cooperation, partnership and resource sharing activities in libraries (Zulu, 2015, Chatterjee, 2016).

As put forward by Bucholz (2011), the digital revolution driven by Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), innovation has also transformed resource sharing among libraries fundamentally. These have impacted on every sphere of library activity for example the form of the library collection development strategies, library buildings and consortia. Computers and networked electronic resources have become an integral part of the library.

Resource sharing in academic libraries usually takes two forms. The first is collaborative collection development, whereby subject specializations are intended to be distributed among libraries within a clearly defined geographic region, so that individual libraries need not attempt to collect resources in all fields; but can concentrate on a particular field. The second form of resource sharing is through various document delivery mechanisms.

Libraries the world over are established to support their parent institutions in actualizing their objectives of teaching, learning and research in different formats. No library, not even the largest and most comprehensive can fulfill all its users’ needs. The largest shared system for library resource sharing is OCLC, which enables over 10 000 libraries in 56 countries to share millions of loans and copies annually. Every 18 seconds, a member library fills a request. More than 7000 libraries used the system in 2016, sharing physical material and more than one million electronically delivered articles (Posner, 2017). There is also an annual OCLC Resource Sharing Conference which focuses on best practices and staff development opportunities. Sharing any one system that automates and simplifies discovery, processing and delivery enables savings of both time and money.

Studies conducted by Okeagu and Okeagu (2008); Edem (2010); Omekwu (2006), Nwalo (2008), Urhiwehu et al. (2015) and Igu and Ojiegbe (2017) have shown that the global information explosion, the cut in library budgetary allocations, the rising costs and complexities of information resources as well as the need to provide the user community with optimal access to needed information make resource sharing initiatives indispensable particularly among academic libraries for effective information dissemination and service delivery in the digital age. However, certain questions remained unanswered in the literature

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