

RESOURCE SHARING AMONG ACADEMIC/RESEARCH
LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper considers resource sharing as a general socio-economic concept necessary for the cooperative survival of the whole world. There should however, be a basis for resource sharing especially among academic/research libraries. In terms of inter-library loans, in particular, the resources have to be in sufficient quantity and quality before sharing could be contemplated. The writer found out after a survey of 24 academic/research libraries that their resources, both in quantity and quality, were too far below the required minimum for meaningful sharing. Most of the stocks of the academic/research libraries in Nigeria are 30-40 years obsolete. With a total stock of only 25 million volumes, no national union catalogue, coupled with the increasing difficulty to purchase new books and renew journal orders abroad, due to the implementation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditionalities, the writer concluded that the climate for sharing resources is not conducive.

The writer has suggested that the NLA should review the whole concept of resource sharing, especially the idea earlier mooted to set up a National Bibliographic and Lending Centre. Academic/research libraries should be grouped into four geographical zones for the purposes of resource sharing. A selective national union catalogue of current resources should be compiled by each zone and new modalities for reactivating resource sharing worked out for each zone. The paper ends with a call on all librarians in Nigeria to strive to make the most of the library resources.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept, "resource sharing", has a wide range of socio-economic connotations. The whole world is existing today mainly through the cooperative sharing of various types of resources. As God would have it, no nation is endowed with all its resource requirements. The nations of the world have therefore been forced to engage in a symbiotic relationship. This is how the accepted axiom, "no man is an island", was conceived and is quite relevant to this exposition. It is from the foregoing context that the concept of resource sharing among academic/research libraries should be seen as an accepted norm of human existence.

From the economic and logistics points of view, no library can acquire all the recorded information in the world. So there is a limit to which any library can acquire information resources. Orr (1977) has asserted that: "No library has existed, does exist, or is ever likely to exist which completely assimilates all graphic records, and it follows therefore that from time to time a library will naturally turn to the stock of other libraries to attempt to satisfy a specific need of one of its readers".

The history of libraries throughout the world and since the inception of the library concept, resources are known to have been shared among libraries. Since no one library was able to acquire all the necessary information resources to satisfy the diverse needs of its readers, there had to be sharing of resources.

The concept of sharing became necessary also as a result of the importance of information resources to development. Information is necessary for development because without adequate, precise and relevant information no meaningful progress can be made in all spheres of human endeavour. As Hoel (1980) said "information is looked upon as a resource, like manpower, materials and money. Information is a resource created by the ingenuity of man, to be used by man for the benefit of man" . So all the information resources available in the academic/research libraries of Nigeria have to be used for the benefit of all Nigerians and the world at large.

However, a major problem arises as to the suitability, adequacy, relevance or otherwise of the information resources available in each or all of the academic/research libraries of Nigeria. This problem is crucial to the development of the nation because, as Womboh (1987) asserted, "whenever there is a discrepancy, for instance, in the affairs of humanity, the causes, in most cases, are traceable to a decision based on wrong information or a decision based on inadequate information ". There is therefore need to know the amount, type and quality of the information resources available in the academic/research libraries of Nigeria. In other words, there has to be a concrete basis or a suitable climate for resource sharing. As Aguolu (1989) said, "the university, college or polytechnic library must possess a minimum number of books and current periodicals, let alone

other types of information resources in certain subjects, to be able to satisfy the basic information and bibliographic needs ". The suitability of the climate of resource sharing among the academic/research libraries of Nigeria will therefore be necessary to be determined in this critical exposition.

As the theme of the seminar/workshop hinges on the improvement of services in academic/research libraries through practical cooperation, this writer will review the existing situation critically and compare it with the ideal situation. Conclusions and suggestions would then be made aimed at improving the ways of resources sharing among academic/research libraries in Nigeria. However, before delving into the critical review, it would be necessary at this juncture to demarcate the planet of the paper by way of defining the key words embodied in the topic as well as spell out the scope of the paper.

2. Definition of Terms

2.1 Resource

This has generally been defined as "wealth, supplies of goods, raw materials, etc., which a person, country, etc., has or can use ... ". In the context of this presentation, a resource could be defined as all the materials that a library possesses. In professional parlance, these are often collectively referred to as library and information resources. According to Womboh (1988) they include such materials like "books, periodicals and audio-visual materials

that are provided for use by people. The books, periodicals and audio-visual materials, such as films, motion pictures, and so forth, are usually housed in a building in a systematic order for easy retrieval".

2.2 Academic/Research Libraries

Simply stated and as the name implies, these are libraries that are to be found in academic/research establishments. Womboh (1986) however defined them synthetically as "Libraries that are normally located in institutions of higher learning like the polytechnics, colleges of education/advanced teachers' colleges, and the universities". Research libraries per se are not many in Nigeria but by definition they are libraries that have research resources exclusively. In the context of this paper, the term academic/research libraries has been used to refer mostly to university libraries.

3. Scope

The paper is restricted geographically to Nigeria except for a few sporadic comparative statements and figures. Also, human possessions of academic/research libraries, though a major resource, have only been mentioned. As the university library possess resources to support both the academic and research programmes, and the universities by far outnumber research institutes in Nigeria, this paper covers mostly cooperative research sharing amongst university libraries.

4. The Climate for Resource Sharing among Academic/Research Libraries in Nigeria

Usually, when any commodity is in short supply or scarce or out of reach of the majority, then the concept of sharing becomes imperative. However, sharing in terms of inter-library loans may not be feasible in the context of the scarcity or shortage of library materials. Ideally and logically a library needs not just to possess resources but to do so in sufficient quantities before contemplating sharing with another library. Otherwise it would be an economic gamble and unintelligible for a library to loan out a copy of a book for instance, if such a book is out of print.

The theoretical formulation or hypothesis of this writer, therefore, is that before any group of libraries could successfully engage themselves in resource sharing they must properly plan to possess multiple copies of their resources. They should also possess reprographic materials to enable them loan out photocopies of materials rather than the originals as the Ptolemics of the ancient Alexandrian Library did. It is the efficacy of this hypothesis that has made it imperative in this paper to survey the climate for resource sharing among academic/research libraries in Nigeria in terms of the quantities of the resources as well as the logistics involved in the whole affair.

A cursory examination of the resources of the academic/research libraries in Nigeria would reveal that they are too limited to contemplate any meaningful sharing.

Ononogbo (1980) found out that:

"For whatever standard that is applied, Nigerian university libraries have bookstocks below their required or ideal number. The necessary corollary is that user saitsfaction cannot be achieved on that score".

Ononogbo also found out that the 20 university libraries he surveyed had a total book collection (including Africana, thesis and government publications) of only 2,382,852 volumes. Womboh (1990) also conducted a survey of bookstocks of all the 30 Nigerian university libraries, out of which only 24 responded. Table I below shows some rather shocking basic statistics:

Table 1: Basic Statistics of bookstocks of 24 Nigerian University Libraries

S/NO.	NAME OF LIBRARY	YEAR FOUNDED	CURRENT STOCK	GRADUATE LIBRARIANS
1.	K. Dike Library, U.I.	1948	370,000*	25
2.	N. Azikiwe Library, U.N.N.	1960	562,409 (Nsukka only)	19
3.	K. Ibrahim Library, A.B.U.	1962	311,488	30
4.	Univ. of Lagos Library	1962	250,000	15
5.	Bayero Univ. Kano Library	1964	160,000	19
6.	University of Benin Library	1970	123,300	16
7.	University of Jos Library	1972	111,280	15
8.	Univ. of Calabar Library	1973	89,009	17
9.	Ramat Library, Univ.Maid.	1975	117,671	24
10.	Univ. of Port-Harcourt Library	1976	51,941	13
11.	U. Danfodiyo Univ. Lib. Sokoto	1977	105,704	16

12.	F.U.T., Owerri Library	1980	28,562	7
13.	F.U.T. Yola, Library	1981	12,000	5
14.	Imo State Univ. Library	1981	18,518	5
15.	Univ. Agric. Makurdi Library	1981	15,237	7
16.	A.T. Balewa Univ. Library	1981	27,396	5
17.	Bendel State Univ. Library	1982	66,878	14
18.	F.U.T. Akure Library	1982	224,000	6
19.	Ogun State Univ. Library	1983	28,921	8
20.	Ondo State University Library	1983	30,000	6
21.	Univ. of Cross R. State Library	1983	33,437	8
22.	Lagos State University Library	1984	30,000	8
23.	F.U.T. Minna Library	1984	9,922	7
24.	N.D.A. (Univ.) Library	1985	24,756	8

*This figure might cover only the main U.I. Library - Kenneth Dike Library.

It would be inconceivable to attempt to compare the resources of Nigerian Universities with those of American Universities where a not-so-popular university like the Princeton University library has 3 million volumes of books - i.e. more than the aggregate book stock of 24 university libraries in Nigeria. Even the total library bookstock of Nigeria has been estimated by Aguolu (1989) to be only about 4 Million volumes. Going by the local standards of the Committee of University Librarians of Nigerian Universities (CULNU), a new university library should have at least 20,000 volumes in the first 3 years of its establishment and should have an annual growth rate of 12,000 volumes. A sample

application of the CULNU yardstick for the university libraries set up in 1981 would reveal that by 1990 they should have the following stocks as calculated and shown in Table II below:

Table 2: Expected bookstock growth of university libraries set up in 1981 as per CULNU standards.

S/NO.	NAME OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARY	BASIC STOCK 1-3 YEARS (1981-83)	EXPECTED STOCK AT 12000P.A (12000X7) 1984-90	CURRENT STOCK	DEFICIT STOCK
1.	F.U.T. Yola	20,000	84,000	12,000	72,000
2.	Imo State Univ.	20,000	84,000	18,518	65,482
3.	Uni. Agric.Makurdi	20,000	84,000	15,237	68,763
4.	A.T. Balewa Univ.	20,000	84,000	27,396	56,604
	TOTAL	80,000	336,000	73,151	262,849

Apart from the inadequate stocks of academic/research libraries of Nigeria as exemplified in Table 1 & 2 above, the quality of the stocks also falls below expectation. Most of the bookstock of the academic/research libraries are antiquated and serve only as shelf-sitters. Such books are not utilized by even the immediate readers - not to talk of external readers. With the implementation of the IMF conditionalities aimed at economic survival, the quality of the bookstocks has become worse. Consequently, most of the bookstocks of the academic/research libraries are 30-40 years out of date. As Aguolu (1989) lamented:

"While the local book production is grossly inadequate, avenues of

acquiring greatly needed books and journals for learning and research from abroad are virtually blocked by the government's fiscal and economic measures, which have grounded many academic and research libraries almost to a halt. These include Second Tier Foreign Exchange Market (SFEM); Foreign Exchange Market (FEM), and Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which have astronomically inflated book prices ..."

The implication of the poor quality of the bookstocks of the academic/research libraries is that inter-library loan requests would not be made for such antiquated resources. In the context of this exposition, this means that the climate for resource sharing would not be conducive on that count.

Apart from the quantity and quality of the resources of the academic/research libraries, other aspects of the climate for resource sharing would include transportation and communication. Luckily, Nigeria has adequate road, rail and air transportation networks. However, the issue of efficiency and safety leaves much to be desired. Communication in terms of postal and telephone services has greatly improved both in quantity and level of efficiency. That apart, most of the universities in Nigeria operate telex services and radio communication systems. With the good and adequate networks of transportation and communication it would be possible to despatch resources to cooperating libraries as well as make bibliographical enquiries from one library to another. Thus, from the view point of transportation and communication, the climate for resource sharing among academic/research libraries is promisingly

conducive.

Another aspect of resource sharing is the need to know what resources are available and where. Usually libraries engaged in resource sharing have a common catalogue called the Union Catalogue. The union catalogue gives the necessary bibliographical details about the resources of all the libraries involved in the cooperative venture. In Nigeria efforts at having such a union catalogue have proved abortive. What could be obtained is a mini union list of the resources of the main library plus those of departmental libraries of a particular university. What is however desirable is a national union list of the resources of all the academic/research libraries. Admittedly this is an expensive venture which may not be feasible under the current SAP. Therefore, the climate of resource sharing may not be conducive on that rather important count. Nevertheless, with the good transportation and communication networks in Nigeria, the problem of a national union catalogue may be surmounted. Reference questions and enquiries for specific resources could be made easily by phone or telex or radio. Such bibliographic enquires could easily be followed by undertaking a ride in the heavily subsidized numerous interstate mass transit programme buses.

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