EVALUATING ACADAMIC LIBRARIES' BOOK VENDORS PERFORMANCE:

A CASE STUDY OF KASHIM IBRAHIM LIBRARY'S VENDORS

BY

UMAR IBRAHIM BLS, MLS, (A.B.U., ZARIA)

BEING PAPER PRESENTED AT THE DEPARTMENTAL SEMINAR.

DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

AHMADU BELLOUNIVERSITY, ZARIA

2001

ABSTRACT

In a time of information explosion, proliferation of publishers and vendors, spiraling cost of information materials and ihe in adequate funding of academic libraries, the acquisition department of academic libraries must determine which book Vendors are serving them most.

To do this successfully, libraries need to evaluate the performance of their Vendors. This research work is therefore the result of an attempt to evaluate Kashim Ibrahim Library's Vendors with the aim of determining how well they are providing library materials and services in accordance with the need of the library.

from the data collected and analysed, the paper concludes dial the library is satisfied with the performanc e of all its foreign Vendors and more than half of its local Vendors.

1.0 Introduction

The university is an institution whose primary functions are teaching; research; pursuit, promotion and dissemination of knowledge; provision of intellectual leadership; and promoting social and economic modernisation.

One of the main institutions that assist the university to realise the above objective is, undoubtedly, the library. The library is generally recognised as the nerve center of academic activities, the reservoir of knowledge and information; a data bank for researchers, etc. Infact Elsworth (1969) summed it all by referring to university library as the heart of the university.

From the foregoing, it is evident that the task of a university library is a very formidable one, especially in this new millenium. Apart from having to cope with the current information and literature explosion, the library has to also endeavour to accommodate and, indeed, satisfy the varied and increasingly complex needs of its users.

The entire machinery of library operation, which is expected to meet up with the above challenges, is centered on collection development. Collection development in its simplistic form is the systematic development of library collection. The process is a standard one and includes the selecting and/or reselection of current and retrospective material, the deselecting or evaluation of the collection as it now exist, the replacement of worn or vanished but useful materials. And the continuing process of surveying the collection to determine new fields to be developed or levels of intensity of collection, which needs to be revised.

From the above definition and explanation, this means that without a carefully selected and coherent collection, the library cannot satisfy the aspiration of its users. Massman & Olson (1971) regarded building the collection as one of the most important task of librarians in the academic

libraries. Edlman & Tatum (1976) also emphasized the importance of good, large number of collection in achieving academic excellence, especially in humanity and social sciences. They noted that investigation has been carried out in the United State of America and those universities that rank high academically are those with large number of collection.

Library collection is built mainly through two processes: Selection and Acquisition. Selection process signifies the process through which library materials are identified and selected for inclusion into the library. Having selected the required library materials, the next task is to acquire the selected materials. Corbin (1971) defined Acquisition work as the means by which additions are made to the library's collection. This work usually includes the ordering and receiving of all types of materials, payment and maintaining of any records (copies of purchase order, invoice, correspondence, etc) necessary for these additions.

Acquiring library materials in the developed countries does not constitute a problem. This is because there are sufficient number of publishers and bookshops/vendors within easy reach of libraries in the developed countries. However, the situation is remarkably different in the developing countries, like Nigeria. Printing and publishing are still at their developing stages and the few available bookshops can neither meet textbook requirements for students nor the specialised needs of the university libraries. Consequently, university libraries depend almost entirely on overseas Vendors for their books and non-books materials.

Until the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (S.A.P), Nigerian University libraries had no difficulty acquiring library materials from abroad. However, the introduction of Second-tier Foreign Exchange Market (SFEM) which later graduated to Foreign Exchange Market (FEM) has undoubtedly affected every aspect of our life including acquisition process. With this, Nigerian University libraries are forced to reduce the numbers of their Vendors abroad and to find alternatives at home.

The choice of both internal and external Vendors then became crucial to the Nigerian University library. The decision as to which supplier to drop and which to retain also became crucial However, one techniques that allows decision to be taken as to which supplier to be retained and which to be dropped, and the choice of Vendors to patronise at all times, is achieved through supplier or vendor evaluation. Crolty (1994:53) defined supplier evaluation as the process of assessing the

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quality of Vendors with the view to determining the best Vendors. The quality of the supplier use by the library is of great importance because Vendors that give high quality service assist the acquisition section of the library to achieve high quality result.

Therefore, evaluating Vendors is not only a way of choosing the best Vendors but that, as observed by Stokley and Reid (1994: 58), the process also provides an excellent opportunity to assess your own acquisition department---work flows, order checking and placement, updating and receipt could all be assessed under the evaluation processes. Apart from determining library priorities, evaluating Vendors as also noted by Crolty (1994: 53) is a way of cost effectively managing funds.

Stockley and Reid (1994: 58) further eloquently summed up the reasons why vendors' surveys should be undertaken in a time of rising costs and reduced budgets. The acquisition department in libraries must determine which book dealers are serving them most. Positive and negative aspects of the dealer's services can be weighed thus enabling personnel to decide which dealer to use in particular situation. However, to Robert (1994: 71) there may be several reasons for wanting to evaluate, but as he noted the bottom line is that we want the best Vendors for the job.

While much have been written on the management of library collections in terms of defining users needs, selecting resources, assuring access, bibliographic control, collection review and record keeping. The literature gives much less analysis and emphasis to the purchase and supply of resource, let alone evaluation of Vendors. Yet, Todd (1994: 61) noted that the quality and appropriateness of the collection hinge in part on the quality and appropriateness of the Vendors. Research evidence suggests that Vendors differ significantly in price, speed of supplying materials, and bibliographic accuracy of notification slips.

It is therefore in view of the above that this researcher set out to evaluate the performance of the Vendors of the biggest library in Africa, south of the Sahara----Kashim Ibrahim library, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. This is done with a view to determining how well their Vendors provide library material and services in accordance to the need of the library.

This study is significance in the sense that information about Vendors' performance can be compiled and used to support policy decision. It also allows the establishment of acceptable standards for supply and ensures that Vendors continue to meet these standards.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

In evaluating Vendors' performance, the Vendors are mainly assessed in how well they can assists acquisitions in it basic tasks. Dolby (1994) identified certain characteristics to be used in the assessment. The characteristics consist of six parts; orders handling, receipt, payments, reports, special services and communication. Specific questions are then asked under each part with the aim of determining how best a supplier is accomplishing that task. For instance, under order handling, the Vendors can be assessed on how fast he supply, how prompt the supplier responses to claims. Or under payment, they could be assessed on weather tiey offer discount or not, or on how low are their handling charges, etc.

Dolby (1994) shows that a single checklist for each supplier can be used for the assessment. On the other hand, a separate checklist for each procedure, such as invoice received, can be used. Robert (1994) similarly observed that data may be collected on work sheets, each work sheet being designed to test one supplier and one specific aspect of performance, e.g. reliability or speed of supply. Using Dolby and Robert characteristics, a modified questionnaire was constructed and used for collecting data for this study (see Appendix I).

The questionnaire was distributed to key staff of the four units of the division: ordering, receiving, bibliographic checking and filing, and invoice clearing and correspondence units. The head of the division was also served with a questionnaire.

The collection Development Division of Kashim Ibrahim Library employ the services of 35 foreign Vendors and as many local Vendors as possible. A purposive sampling technique was used to select ten foreign and ten local Vendors. Data collected in respect of these Vendors was analysed and discussed using simple statistical techniques such as mean, percentage and tables.

3.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed, 5 for each of the 20 foreign and local Vendors selected for the study. All the questionnaires were returned duly completed. Table 3.1 below shows the distribution of Vendors and the number of years in which they have been supplying the library.

Table 3.1 DISTRIBUTION OF VENDORS AND THE NUMBER OF YEARS IN WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN SUPPLING THE LIBRARY.

	FOREIGN VENDORS		LOCAL VENDORS	
YEARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
0 -5	1	10.00	1	10.00
6-10	1	10.00	4	40.00
11-15	3	30.00	4	40.00
16-20	5	50.00	1	10.00
ABOVE 20	--	--	--	--
TOTAL	10	100.00	10	100.00

From the above table it can clearly be seen that the library has been patronising half of the Foreign Vendors 5 (50.00%) for the past 20 years, 3(30:00%) for 15years and 2(20:00%) for between 5-10 years. At the local scene only 4 (40.00%) of the local Vendors enjoy patronage of the library for the past 15 years, another 4(40:00%) for 10 years. While only 1(10:00%) spend 20 years on the of local Vendors.

The five foreign Vendors that have been supplying the library for the last 20 years include Blackwells of Oxford & North America, Swets, Oxford University and Cambridge University Presses. While the four local Vendors that have been with the library since the last 15 years include Academic Press, Longman, Heinemann and University Press of Ibadan. Only Macmillan Nigeria Publishers has been supplying the library for the past 20 years. Perhaps, both James currency publishers (foreign) and Islamic Publishers (local) recorded the lowest period because they are new comers.

Question 4 – 20 in the questionnaire were variable that seek to find out various activities of Vendors, such as order handling, speed of deliveries, special services, communication, etc. Respondents responded by evaluating each variable on a likert scale. Any assessment above 3 is considered either high, good, well, or fast and below 3 is considered low, bad, poor, or slow. While

3 is considered just all right, moderate or average.

3.1 FOREIGN VENDORS

It is interesting to note that all the respondents are satisfied with almost all the services of all the foreign Vendors. It is only on three services; customised report, price changes and supply of sample issues that respondents assessed 5 Vendors as performing poorly. In fact these services are absent among some Vendors.

The services rendered by both Blackwell's of Oxford and North America are found to be the best. They deliver supplies very fast, described their items very well and offers very good discount. However they do not offer freight free service and very rarely they supply sample issues. While the services offered by James Currency Publishers are to be the least with most of its services being moderate except in the description of their items and invoicing, which are found to be very good.

3.2 LOCAL VENDORS

Respondents equally assessed the local Vendors like their foreign counter part. However not all the services of all the local Vendors are satisfactory. Only 3 Vendors had all their services assessed very high. The remaining 7 had 2 or more of their services assessed very low in the area of costomised reports, price changes and supply of sample issues. As high as 7 local Vendors are found not to offer costomised reports, price changes and supply of sample copies.

Heinemann and Macmillan offer the best services. They respond to both claims and enquires promptly, offer reasonable discounts and their level of reporting also is very high. However, they too, are deficient in the costomised reports, price changes and supply of sample copies. About 70 % of the services rendered by Islamic Publishers are assessed very low. The reason for this could be due to the fact that Islamic Publishers are the only Vendors of Islam and Arabic books in the northern part of the country where the library under the study resides. Also, the Islamic Supplier is relatively new in the profession.

To collaborate the above findings, respondents were also asked to assessed and rank order each supplier in terms of three important variables, which are speed, cost and reliability. Table 3.2 and 3.3 below show the results.

TABLE 3.2 RANK ORDER OF FOREIGN VENDORS

FOREIGN	RELIABILITY		SPEED		COSTS	
SUPPLIER	$\overline{X}$	Position	$\overline{X}$	Position	$\overline{X}$	Position
1. Blackwells Oxford	1.10	1	5.00	5	1.00	1
2. Blackwells N/A	1.75	2	3.50	2	1.75	2
3. Swets	2.75	3	5.50	8	3.00	4
4. EBSCO	3.00	4	5.50	8	2.75	3
5. O.U.P	9.00	10	5.00	5	3.00	4
6. Kluwer .A. P	6.00	7	5.00	5	6.00	8
7. Chapman	4.50	6	6.00	10	4.50	7
8. C. U. P.	3.00	4	3.50	2	3.00	4
9. James C.P	8.50	9	4.00	4	8.50	10
10. Rouledge P	6.00	7	3.00	1	6.00	8

TABLE 3.3 RANK ORDER OF LOCAL VENDORS

LOCAL	*RELIABILITY*		*SPEED*		*COSTS*	
SUPPLIER	$\overline{X}$	Position	$\overline{X}$	Position	$\overline{X}$	Position
1. Macmillan	4.00	3	5.50	7	5.00	5
2. Spectrum	5.30	6	4.00	2	3.50	2
3. NNPC	6.80	7	6.00	2	5.50	8
4. AUP	6.80	7	5.50	7	5.50	8
5. Academic Press	7.50	9	5.00	5	5.00	5
6. Islamic .P. Ltd	8.00	10	5.00	5	5.00	5
7. U.P, Ife	4.30	4	6.00	9	6.00	10
8. U.P, Ibadan	3.00	2	4.50	3	3.50	2
9. Longman	4.50	5	4.50	3	4.00	4
10. Heinemann	2.80	1	3.00	1	3.00	1

Table 3.2 shows the result of foreign Vendors. Blackwell of Oxford and North America came 1st and 2nd respectively in all the 3 variables assessed. This result has confirmed the earlier assessment. It is not surprising that both Vendors took these positions. This is because both Vendors are one, with one serving as the headquarter and the other branch. Swets came 3rd in reliability but 4th in speed and cost. While EBSCO outsmart Swets by taking 3rd position in speed and cost.

It is surprising to find Oxford University Press taking the last position despite the fact that James Curry publishers which is ranked 9th is much newer among Kashim Ibrahim Library's Vendors.

Table 3.3 shows the result of the local Vendors. Heinemann came 1st in all the 3 variables assessed. The University press Ibadan came 2nd in reliability and cost, while taking 3rd position in

speed. Its counterpart the University Press Ife ranked only 4th in reliability but 9th and 10th in speed and cost.

CONCLUSION

From the result of this study, it can be concluded that the performance of almost all the foreign Vendors and more than half of the local Vendors are satisfactory. Only about 2 (20.00%) of the local Vendors performance are unsatisfactory. Three services; customised reports, price change and supply of sample issues are identified in this study as lacking in most of the foreign & local Vendors.