

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY AND THE ACADEMIC
COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the concept of library and the relevance of University Library in an academic setting. The collection, administrative structure, and services of University Libraries as well as what it takes to ensure an effective use of University Libraries was highlighted. It concludes that the availability of a viable University Library and the provision of effective library systems, resources and services as well as its use a function of the extent the effort to which the library stakeholders collaborate among themselves to ensure the attainment of the University objectives and functions.

Introduction

A Library can simply be described as an organized collection of information resources/materials. Such materials/resources could be in printed format such as books, encyclopedias, dictionaries, periodicals, maps, pictures, etc. They could also be in non-printed format such as films, computer diskettes/CDs/DVDs/Flash drives, Internet resources, online databases, slides, etc. The total make-up of a library collection is largely a function of the objectives establishing it, the nature and type of customers targeted to use it and the type of services to be provided.

Essentially, a library should be conceived as an organized collection of information resources regardless of the type and format rather than a mere building designated as such. What matters most is the nature and arrangement of the collection rather than the place of location. Hence, there are different locations of libraries such as in workplaces, residents, public places, worship places, classrooms, vehicles (mobile libraries), boxes, and of courses, a designated building named library.

Different libraries exist to cater for different interests and purposes. There are such type of libraries as School Library, College Library, Special Library, Private Library, academic library, University Library, etc. A University library can simply be described as an organised collection of printed and non-printed information resources dedicated for the use of the members of a University community. Its main objective is to serve the main functions of a University – teaching, learning and research.

Library Collection

The collection of typical University Library comprised of all the relevant information resources that reflect all the programmes/courses offered in the University as well as other related areas of studies, research and learning identified to be of cognate relationship and importance to the programmes/courses run in such University. The collections include Directories, Almanacs, Books Periodicals, Encyclopaedias, Maps, Manuscripts, Government documents, academic research reports, Administrative reports and other forms of printed documents. Other types of collection include non-printed documents such as films, slides, online databases, CD and DVD documents; microforms; audio-visual; and all types and format of relevant e-resources.

By proxy, it could be said that the extent of the type, nature and content of a University Library collection transcends beyond what is physically available in the building to include that of others it collaborates/cooperates with. The ICT has made the collection of a library to expand by proxy through online system services.

However, the extent to which these collections are used by the target customers is largely a function of its relevance, currency, ease of access, the environmental comfort of the library, and convenience of user.

Library Administrative Division

A typical University Library is administratively sub-divided into the following divisions:

- (i) Collection Development Division – responsible for the acquisition of all the information resources of the library through all acceptable and legal means.

- (ii) Technical Service Division – responsible for processing of the information resources acquired, irrespective of any means, for easy retrieval, access and use.
- (iii) Serials Division – responsible for managing all serials publications acquired by the Library to ensure their full access and utilization.
- (iv) Readers’ Services Division – responsible for registering library customers, charging and discharging information resource to and from library customers as well as shelf maintenance.
- (v) Reference and Information Services Division – responsible for providing all sorts of reference and information services needed by the library clientele directly or indirectly, as well as the maintenance of reference collections.
- (vi) Media Division – responsible for managing all non-print collections of the library as well as public relations services.
- (vii) ICT Division – responsible for managing all the ICT programmes and systems of the library.
- (viii) Administrative division – responsible for the overall administration and management of the library.

Library Services

There is no limitation as to the type of services a University Library should/could offer to its customers. The limiting factors in the provision of variety of services to University Library customers and indeed by other libraries’ to their customers include:

- type and caliber of staff;
- type and nature of collection ;

- type and nature of academic programmes and research areas in place;
- nature, characteristics and type of library customers;
- type of library facilities and infrastructure available.
- type of administrative structure and support in place;
- type and level of material and financial support available
- type and extent of collaborative and cooperative ventures with other libraries available;
- type and level of external support the library receives from governmental and non-governmental agencies/institutions;
- the nature of the physical environment in which the library building is situated; and
- Other human, natural, material as well as socio-economic and political dispositions of the library.

Some of the services provided by University Libraries to their teaming customers include:

- Reference and Information services – designed to assist the users secure, access and use a needed information, identify where a given information can be located within and outside the library, teach users how to effectively use the library and information resource and any other service that will easily link and information seeker with the needed information;
- Online Services – designed to enable users retrieve and or access information especially on real time basis through the application of ICTs such as Internet, system networks, Online database, blogs, hotspots, user groups, face books, etc.

- Reserve Book services – designed to serve teaming users with the much needed but limited relevant copies of information resources;
- Circulation Services- designed to facilitate the use of information resources within and outside the library premises especially through overnight or periodically designed loan requires;
- Current Awareness Services - designed to enlighten the library users on the on-goings within and outside the University environment especially through regular /periodic publication of news bulletins; Bulletin Boards, newsgroup, press release, etc;
- Exhibition and display services designed to advertise the University products such as research reports, publications, staff/students' project works; etc to the University Community and outside;
- Public Relations Services – design to link the library with the University Community using the ICT technologies to promote/ showcase the activities of the library and the parent institution through press releases, coverage/documentation of important events on the campus and elsewhere;
- Photocopying and Building Services – designed to make copies of highly demanded publications available to the customers without necessarily breaking the copy right laws and intellectually property protocols. It also serves to secure the publications from all forms of abuses as well as elongate their life spans;
- Interlibrary Loan Services – designed to assist users secure and access information resources and services from other cooperating libraries within and outside the library's locality;

- Library Orientation Services – designed to educate or teach the library users, especially the new comers, how to use the library systems and services;
- Academic/Intellectual Promotion Services – design to create an enabling environment for the promotion of intellectual/academic activities through organizing/hosting lectures, Seminars, talk shows conferences, workshops journal publication and distribution;
- Media Services – design to link the University Community, particularly the library users, with the outside world especially through the use of media technologies such as Cabled Radio and Television network services, Internet, intranet, etc to view programmes identified to be of interest and relevant to their needs, filming and photographing of important activities for the viewing of the customers; etc.

University Library Use.

It is generally agreed that University Library is the main Information Resource Centre and reservoir of knowledge of all types of information needed by all and sundry in the University for the promotion and achievement of the desired intellectual/academic needs as well as the socio-political, economic and cultural expectations of the main stakeholders of the University Community. Students, staff and researchers, require constant use of information contained in the collection of the library for use and reuse for overall development and advancement of the individuals, community, society and the nation at large.

The assurance of effective and efficient utilization of University library resources, systems and Services by the target customers is largely contingent upon the availability and provision of the followings:

- Current information resources in both print and non-print format covering all the programmes/courses offered by the University as well as other related to the allied academic activities of the University found in other academic Institutions within and outside its environments; 'ready – to- work' and 'to assist', staff to ensure the provision of the relevant services needed by the customers as well as also motivate them to make the best use of the library systems, resources and services.
- Organised collection of information resources, especially through proper cataloguing, classification, filing, shelving and re-shelving of the information resources consulted. A variety of processing styles and manuals are available for use by different libraries. A majority of University/Academic Libraries use the ACCR2, LC Scheme and LC Subject Headings to process their information resources in order to ensure easy access, retrieval and use of the collections;
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- Variety of library and information services that would meet the varying and increasing needs of the clientele on one hand, and also to attract new users as well as retain the existing ones; on the other hand;
- An enticing and friendly library environment to ensure the comfort and convenience of both the staff and the library customers;

- Attractive and easy to acquire library skill training and also for the inexperienced existing ones;
- State-of- the-art library systems and facilities such as computer systems, Internet Services; and other ICTs that would facilitate easy access and utilization/exploitation of the library resources and services at convenience;
- Deliberate moves and activities that would link the library resources, systems and services with the University's academic programmes and other Socio-economic, political and cultural activities in the University by all the library stakeholders, particularly by the academics, researchers, and the library staff;
- Conducive avenue for mutual exchange of ideas, information and knowledge among the library customers and in between them and the library staff, especially through seminars, meetings, etc.
- Attractive and viable channels/avenues for promoting the ideals, programmes and activities of the library to the University community and the outside world; and
- Human, material and financial support by the University authority and other donor agencies as well as good will individuals for the provision of uninterrupted library and information services.
- Collaborative programmes of activities among the library staff, the academics/researchers and other interested library stakeholders/users for the provision of library and information services beneficial to the existing and potential library patrons within and outside the University environment.

The above expositions presuppose that all the library stakeholders (library staff, University Administration, staff and students) have a major

role to ensuring the availability of viable University library systems, and provision of relevant and adequate information resources and services as well as their effective and efficient use. While it's the responsibility of the library staff to devise strategies that would match every user to the relevant information resource and service, the University Administrative, as a policy, must provide regular material and financial support.

Similarly the University staff, particularly the academics and researchers must lend support to the library staff for proper utilization of the library systems, resources and services especially through providing academic activities and tasks that will require the use of library systems, resources and services.

Concluding Remarks

There is no doubt in the fact that the survival and flourishing of the academic community is largely dependent upon the viability of the University Library systems as well as the relevance and currency of its information resources and services.

Essentially therefore, the proper use of the library systems, resources and services is a function of the extent of the efforts put in place by not only the library staff but by also all the other stakeholders in the University Community to ensure the effective use of the library and provision of the requisite systems, resources and services that would meet the yearnings of the teaming clients at all times. In effect, the library staff, the University Administration as well as other University staff (academic and non-academic) and students each has a crucial role to play in ensuring the availability and provision of viable enabling environment that would facilitate the effective and efficient utilization of the University Library

system, resources and services needed and necessary for achieving the University teaching, learning and research functions.

Literature Consulted

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A paper presented at a seminar organised by Federal Government Girls College, Bakori, held at the Library Complex on 7th July 2009.