

Fee-Based Services as Source for Funding Academic Libraries in Nigeria

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Abstract

Academic libraries have a crucial role to play in the achievement of the goals of their parent institutions. However, State owned academic libraries in Nigeria have generally been poorly funded despite various funds been allocated for the running of its daily operations. University libraries have experienced dwindling budgetary allocations which hover around 3% of the total universities' annual budget. This study therefore investigates how fee-based services can be used as an internally generated revenue complementing the fund released by library management in improving the library services. A structured questionnaire (45) was distributed and collected from libraries of two state universities (Tai Solarin University of Education and Olabisi Onabanjo University) in Ogun State, Nigeria. A descriptive research design was adopted for this study. The questionnaire was administered by selected Assistant Librarians in the two study areas. Available literature was also reviewed to augment the study. The study revealed that over 80% of the respondents from Library A (TASUED) agreed that library services can be packaged for a fee to interested users for the purpose of funding the library internally, while less than 50% of the respondents from Library B (OOU) disagreed that library services should not be packaged for a fee to its users. Finally the study revealed that from all the participating universities, 61.29% would target researchers while 33.57% of respondents would target lecturers and 61.39% would target postgraduate students, and 43.86% of responses were targeted at other potential users. And it was revealed that it is not the information that must be paid for, but the skill and additional time spent by the library staff to do the search for the client. They however, indicated that the libraries' mandate is not to dabble in sale of information. A policy direction on this subject is recommended for the libraries to take advantage of selling some aspects of services as good potential source of funding to help them solve their financial crisis.

Keywords

Library services, Funds/Income generation, Academic Libraries, Fee-based services.

I. Introduction

An academic library is the nerve centre or the hub around which scholarship revolves. It is an indispensable instrument for intellectual development. A well-stocked university library is a storehouse of information, or a record of human experience to which users may turn to for data or information. [1]observe that academic libraries have for centuries played critically important roles in supporting research in all subjects and disciplines within their host universities or colleges. [2]assert that in academic communities, libraries are indispensable. [3]writing on the relevance of academic libraries, stated the functions of academic library as: Provision of materials for undergraduate instruction, term paper as well as supplementary reading. Provision of materials in support of faculty, external and collaborative researches. Over the years university libraries in Nigeria have been striving to meet users demands, ensuring that information is of high quality, disseminated accurately and in a timely fashion. Various patterns and trends have been driving the changes in the use of academic libraries in Nigeria today. The effectiveness, viability and vitality of academic libraries are increasingly at risk. The sophistication of the students and researchers needs makes them to place a lot of demands on the university library as to obtain the needed information [3].

Academic libraries over the world play prominent roles in institutions by providing suitable environment for teaching and learning, research and knowledge dissemination.

State owned academic libraries continue to struggle with the implementation of this recommendation. What is more, even the percentages given in the various academic libraries have been dwindling.

Nigerian University Libraries are forever attempting to secure adequate funds to catch up with the scope of its prerogative services. Where fund available is shared as in many universities, according to departments, there is not much of the unallocated pool for the library to dip into, in acquiring a depth of materials to cover an extensive range of collection for the institution.

In the best of time, Nigerian academic libraries are not receiving the funding that would make them attain their potentials and to be efficient and effective. Nigerian higher education are expanding and developing (in terms of numbers) at such a rapid rate that the library is continuously trying to build up and to catch up with the galloping rate of expansions in building up basic stocks and in the provision of essential service for new programmes [5].

In Nigeria, the fortune or misfortune of academic libraries depend almost entirely on the fund received from the parent institutions. In these institutions, funding, standards and quality management of information services are determined through the political process which regulates the allocation of resources for competing priorities in the institution. The big question is how these academic libraries could perform their prerogative functions in the face of dwindling funding from their parent institution.

In the knowledge-based society and economy of the 21st century, users' expectations and engagement with knowledge and information have grown in sophistication. However, Nigerian academic libraries are yet to catch up with modern expectations in information technology. They cannot boast of adequate funding that would make them attain their potentials.

The researcher observed that library funding has nose-dived with its attendant problems. Often times, library management purchase few copies of important titles as against the required number if

fund at their disposal is inadequate. Besides, large collections of broken down computers and other information technology facilities are not properly maintained and repaired or replaced because of insufficient fund. Finally, lack of fund has equally put the librarians and other para-professional staff at a disadvantage of attending workshop/seminars and conferences which could enhance their productivity and professionalism.

This study therefore investigates how fee-based services can be used as an internally generated revenue complementing the fund released by library management in improving the library services.

II. Research Objectives

The study investigated the potential of fee-based library services to contribute to income generation of state university libraries in Nigeria. It specifically sought to answer the following research questions:

- I. Can library services be packaged for a fee to interested users?
- II. Would you consider sale of information products as a viable means for the library to generate income internally?
- III. Which group of your users would you target for fee-based library service?

III. Review of Literature

Academic Library Funding in Nigerian Academic Libraries

According to [5] Nigeria has been experiencing a hard-hitting period of economic difficulty since the mid-80s and the nation's institutions are not spared. The situation is particularly bad when books and journals imported from abroad are to be paid for in foreign currencies. In Federal universities, academic libraries derive their main source of funds from their parent institutions, which in turn derives a large proportion of its funds from the Federal Government through National Universities Commission (NUC). Some decades ago, the National Universities Commission has recommended that at least five percent (5%) of the current university budget be allocated to the library. This was upgraded to ten per cents (10%) in 1992 following pressures from the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). The NUC gave its support and instructed that 10% of the university's budget should be given to its library i.e. Library Development Fund (LDF). It was made a separate item on the budget and the library would know how much to spend at any given time.

Unfortunately, the tide is changing. What is called the library Development Fund (LDF) has been stopped since 2001. The joy of libraries getting ten percent of the recurrent institutions budget has been short-lived [6]. Each university administration now decides what to give to its library. According to [7], many methods aid the non-compliance. The academic libraries covered by this study have different stories to tell. The University of Lagos, which is a federal university, has not received more than five per cent since then, [6]. This is in spite of the inflation and the increasing cost of books, journals and other library materials. At the State Universities, the University Librarians prepare and defend a budget and in a system where, "he who has the loudest voice gets the largest share", the University Librarian has to be vocal and bold for his budget not to be slashed. It is a different ball game at the private Universities where the founder and board of trustees determine what share of the university budget goes to the library.

[6]. intimated that "of all the different types of libraries in Nigeria, only university libraries have a clearly-defined policy on funding.

They are allocated 10 per cent of the annual recurrent budget of their parent universities, a result of the Federal Government and Academic Staff Union of Universities agreement of 1992. It is [however,] regrettable that this agreement has not been fully implemented. Some university executives occasionally use library funds as "soft loans," or internal borrowing to finance university activities without seeking the consent of university librarians.

It has become imperative for public university libraries to look elsewhere for additional sources of funding for their numerous engagements. It is in the light of this that this paper seeks to identify services that can be marketed to generate income to enhance effective and efficient information provision to the users of state owned academic libraries in Nigeria.

Fee-Based Services in Academic Libraries in Nigeria

A few studies are in the literature on marketing of products and services in Ghanaian university libraries. [8] advocates that because the government pays for library services and so libraries do not see the need to charge users for information that has already been paid for. What happens to these libraries in a situation where source of funding is not sufficient for these services?

Also, a survey conducted by [8] indicated that types of fee-based services provided by libraries in agriculture related special libraries in Nigeria included online bibliographic search, photocopying, Email, CD-ROM searches and training. They gave varied reasons for the fee-based services offered. The reasons are mainly to make up for the shortfall in government subvention, to improve quality of service and to recover cost of service.

[9] revealed that majority of the library services and products were free in Ibadan and Lagos medical libraries. They indicated that the most common fee-based services are photocopying and reprographic services which are not traditional library services. They however indicated that new products and services that medical librarians would want to introduce to their libraries in order to generate funds include indexing and abstracting services. They intimated that, for libraries to develop products which will sell in libraries, five key problems need to be addressed. These are idea generation; identifying the business opportunity, doing venture analysis, product design and development and market strategy.

In a survey conducted by [10] on "Marketing Library services: the case of state owned multi-campus university libraries in Ghana, 74.4% of user-respondents of over 300 indicated that they were prepared to pay for some services and products offered by their respective campus libraries. He therefore suggested that service providers should take advantage to introduce services which are very well packaged to meet user-needs at realistic charges.

In the opinion of [10], the successful library is the one that provides a range of expensive resources that most individuals cannot afford and provide a well-established mechanism of information acquisition and dissemination that is accessible to most people. There are indeed different schools of thought with regard to libraries charging fees for some library services. In this regard, [12] points out that, those who are arguing in favour of fee-based services are gaining the upper hand in the debate because many compounding variables have made it expedient for libraries around the world to look outside their traditional sources of funding in order to raise additional funds to be able to sustain the level of services which hitherto, normal funding was able to take care of. Sight should not be lost on the fact that, libraries have become clients of commercial databases on the Internet. So to be able to deliver services efficiently, some categories of services must be paid for. This point is further buttressed by [6], who is of the

view that increased customer satisfaction will result in increased willingness to pay for the services offered.

IV. Methodology

A structured questionnaire (45) was used to distributed and collected from libraries of two state universities in Ogun State, Nigeria (Tai Solarin University of Education, OlabisiOnabanjo University). A descriptive research design was adopted for this study. The questionnaire was administered by selected Assistant Librarians in the three study areas. Available literature was also reviewed to augment the study.

The respondents were selected from the para-professional and professional classes of library staff in these university libraries using purposive sampling method.

The data collected were analysed using simple percentages and tables to establish facts on sale of products and services as an additional source of funding for the university libraries.

V. Results and Discussion

The total responses received from the forty-five (45) copies of questionnaire sent were twenty-four, representing 53.3% of the expected responses. Out of the twenty-four respondents, 54.2% were male while the other 45.8% were female. Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUED) returned the highest number of responses 66.7% while OlabisiOnabanjo University returned 46.7% of responses. These two academic libraries are randomly designated Library A and Library B to ensure confidentiality of responses.

The qualifications of respondents listed, ranged from Diploma in Library Studies through Bachelor of Library Science and BSc to MSc in Library and Information Science as well as other postgraduate degrees in information-related disciplines. It must be noted that about 20% of the respondents had already enrolled for their Doctor of Philosophy.

As regards how long respondents had worked at their current duty post, it was observed that the time spanned between four months and thirteen years. Respondents had also worked in various departments of the participating universities. The departments included: Cataloguing, Acquisitions, Reference and Research, Circulation Desk, Serials sections and ICT unit of the library.

Table 1: Can library services be packaged for a fee to interested users?

	Agreed %	Disagreed %
Library A	83.87	16.13
Library B	40.65	59.35

The above table revealed that over 80% of the respondents from Library A agreed that library services can be packaged for a fee to interested users for the purpose of funding the library internally, while less than 50% of the respondents from Library B disagreed that library services should not be packaged for a fee to its users.

Table 2: Would you consider sale of information products as a viable means for the library to generate income internally?

Libraries	Yes %	No %
A	90	10
B	56.13	43.87

While expressing the various reasons why an academic library cannot sell information products, 90% of the respondents from Library A considers the sale of information products as a potential vital source for the library the table also revealed that 43% of the respondents from Library B still would not consider the sale of information products as a means of income generation for the library.

Table 3: Which group of your users would you target for fee-based library service?

Libraries	Lecturers %	Postgraduate students %	Researchers %	Others %
A	25.81	29.03	20.64	24.51
B	7.76	32.36	40.65	19.35
Total	33.57	61.39	61.29	43.86

From all the participating universities, 61.29% would target researchers while 33.57% of respondents would target lecturers and 61.39 would target postgraduate students, and 43.86% of responses were targeted at other potential users. Some respondents went further to specify that their choice of 'others' meant; industries, researchers outside the university community, consultants as well as students outside the university undertaking professional courses such as Institute of Chartered Accountants (I.C.A.), Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (C.I.M.A.) etc.

Some respondents indicated that, it is not the information that must be paid for, but the skill and additional time spent by the library staff to do the search for the client. As regards the question on which group of users could be the primary target of this enterprise in the library, it can be observed from the responses provided that, the prime target would be postgraduate students and researchers. The number of responses provided in each option was taken as a percentage of the total number of respondents.

Proposal from the Selected University Libraries

There were many proposals by respondents to be considered in the event of a library embarking on packaging of information for a fee. Some of them were charging users for requests received from local and libraries abroad through the inter-library loans and document delivery (ILL/DD), orientation and registration of users seem to push the libraries to full commercialization thus moving them away from the mission of the parent university. However, it was found that all respondents generally agreed that libraries should be involved in information consultancy and this should bring money to the individual libraries just as any consultancy service will bring funds to the organization undertaking it.

VI. Conclusions

Respondents from the two selected state owned academic libraries as regards to the profession librarianship is encouraging and over 20% have even started there PhD programmes retrospectively.

The study also revealed that the respondents had worked in various departments of the participating universities. The departments included: Cataloguing, Acquisitions, Reference and Research, Circulation Desk, Serials sections and ICT unit of the library.

The study revealed that over 80% of the respondents from Library A agreed that library services can be packaged for a fee to interested users for the purpose of funding the library internally, while less than 50% of the respondents from Library B disagreed that library services should not be packaged for a fee to its users.

Finally the study revealed that from all the participating universities, 61.29% would target researchers while 33.57% of respondents would target lecturers and 61.39 would target postgraduate students, and 43.86% of responses were targeted at other potential users, and that, it is not the information that must be paid for, but the skill and additional time spent by the library staff to do the search for the client.

VII. Recommendations

It is recommended that, university libraries in Nigeria should take advantage of this potentially viable means of fund/income generation, they should through their Library Committees, push for a paradigm shift in their mandate.

It is also recommended that, implementing a policy on the packaging and sale of information products to actual and potential clients must involve adequate planning. This will include needs assessment and analysis, publicity and intensive user education. Nothing should be taken for granted or assumed. Library units responsible for this should look for the research interests or profiles of researchers and entrepreneurs so they could provide quality services to them for a fee.

Staff training will be crucial to the effective and efficient functioning of such units. Some level of expertise in information searching on a wide range of subjects is required. For this reason, it will be very good to get subject-specialists to monitor the activities of these units. These subject specialists may not be people who are authorities in their disciplines but those who have studied particular subjects up to at least Bachelor's degree level.

University libraries have a mandate to fulfil in their parent institutions. In order that they do not renege on this mandate, they can also make industry the target for sale of information products. This way, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) can be done for good returns. Libraries can search and package the information needs of industry in the area of research and innovation. Research departments of industry or their information centres can rely on university libraries for information on research and new developments in their areas of interest. Industry in turn could give back in support of the library's activities. This support or returns can either be in cash or in kind.

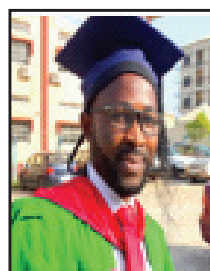
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