DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

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1. **Resource Sharing and Networking is inevitable in Libraries, Discuss**

2. **The History and Evolution of Resource Sharing and Networking in Nigeria**

LIS 416-RESOURCE SHARING AND NETWORKING

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Abstract

This work explores the concept of resource sharing and networking among libraries, highlighting its inevitability in the modern information landscape. It examines the driving factors behind resource sharing, such as escalating costs of information resources, the exponential growth of information, and the need for broader access to specialized materials. The history and evolution of resource sharing and networking in Nigeria are traced, shedding light on the collaborative efforts and initiatives undertaken by Nigerian libraries over time. The formation of library consortia, the adoption of information and communication technologies (ICTs), and the rise of institutional repositories and open access initiatives are discussed.

Introduction

Libraries today continue to adopt innovative methods to meet the evolving needs of their users. This trend has been a constant throughout the history of libraries. Limited funding and the rapid growth of information have significantly impacted libraries and their users. Consequently, resource sharing has been a fundamental concept in libraries since their inception. Regardless of their funding, libraries recognize the challenge of acquiring all necessary resources and services for their patrons. Abdulrahman, Awuhe & Ojobo (2015) noted that the scarcity of financial resources coupled with the information explosion has created a dilemma for librarians. To address this, libraries have embraced creativity and innovation to ensure their clients' information needs are fully satisfied, giving rise to the concepts of resource sharing and networking. These processes have continuously evolved, with the potential for more sophisticated mechanisms and approaches emerging. A library's fundamental role, as a dynamic institution, is to align its resources with the requirements of its users (Abdulrahman, Awuhe & Ojobo, 2015). The academic library landscape is changing in terms of resources and user expectations, with information once exclusive to print now available through various formats like print, CD-ROMs, online platforms, and electronic

sources (Ani, Esin, & Edem, 2005). Today, numerous resource sharing and networking systems exist, ranging from collaborations among smaller libraries to broader global networks like PROQUEST databases. These endeavors aim to ensure effective information delivery to library users.

Definitions

Resource sharing refers to a joint use of resources available on a system or a network by user or peripherals. In the language of information management, when we talk about resource sharing we simply mean collective use of information of all types by various end users from a control coordinating unit or from within a network component at a reduced cost with easy accessibility.

Muthu (2013) defines resource sharing is nothing but sharing of library resources by certain participating libraries among themselves on the basis of the principle of co-operation. This is applicable in sharing of documents, manpower, services, space and equipment. In addition to the words of Muthu, resource sharing is aimed at sharing the resources and services of participating libraries.

1. **The Inevitability of Resource Sharing and Networking among Libraries**

Resources sharing and networking in libraries have become inevitable practices in the modern information landscape. The exponential growth of information resources, coupled with the ever-increasing costs of acquiring and maintaining these resources, has necessitated collaboration and resource sharing among libraries. This approach not only optimizes the utilization of available resources but also enhances access to a broader range of information for users.

One of the primary drivers for resource sharing and networking in libraries is the escalating cost of information resources. Academic and research libraries, in particular, face substantial

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financial constraints in acquiring and maintaining subscriptions to scholarly journals, databases, and electronic resources (Tamrakar & Mukherjee, 2021). By forming resource-sharing networks, libraries can collectively pool their resources, enabling them to access a wider array of materials at a fraction of the cost (Kulkarni & Deshpande, 2012). This collaborative approach not only maximizes the use of limited budgets but also ensures that users have access to a broader range of information resources.

Furthermore, the sheer volume of information being produced and disseminated has rendered it impractical for any single library to acquire and maintain comprehensive collections (Jagtar Singh & Arora, 2009). Resource sharing and networking allow libraries to leverage the collective strengths of their collections, effectively expanding the breadth and depth of available resources for their users (Jalloh, 2019). This is particularly crucial in specialized or niche subject areas, where the pooling of resources can significantly enhance access to rare or obscure materials. In addition to the financial and collection-related benefits, resource sharing and networking in libraries facilitate the exchange of knowledge, expertise, and best practices. Through collaborative initiatives, librarians can share their professional experiences, discuss challenges, and collectively develop solutions to common issues (Kulkarni & Deshpande, 2012). This cross-pollination of ideas and expertise fosters innovation and ensures that libraries remain responsive to the evolving needs of their user communities.

Resource sharing and networking in libraries also contribute to the democratization of information access. By breaking down geographical and institutional barriers, these collaborative efforts enable users to access resources beyond the confines of their local library (Tamrakar & Mukherjee, 2021). This is particularly beneficial for researchers, scholars, and students who

require access to specialized or unique materials that may not be available in their immediate vicinity.

Moreover, the advent of digital technologies has further accelerated the need for resource sharing and networking in libraries. The proliferation of electronic resources, such as e-books, e-journals, and digital repositories, has created new opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing (Jagtar Singh & Arora, 2009). Libraries can leverage these technologies to streamline resource sharing processes, facilitate seamless access to digital materials, and enable users to access information resources from remote locations (Kulkarni & Deshpande, 2012).

Despite the numerous benefits, resource sharing and networking in libraries are not without challenges. Issues such as copyright considerations, standardization of metadata and cataloging practices, and the development of robust technological infrastructures must be addressed to ensure seamless collaboration (Jalloh, 2019). Additionally, libraries may need to navigate organizational and cultural barriers, as well as legal and regulatory frameworks that vary across different regions and institutions (Tamrakar & Mukherjee, 2021).

In conclusion, resource sharing and networking in libraries have become inevitable practices in the current information landscape. The ever-increasing costs of information resources, the exponential growth of information, and the need for broader access to specialized materials have necessitated collaborative efforts among libraries. By pooling resources, sharing expertise, and leveraging digital technologies, libraries can provide their users with enhanced access to a wealth of information resources. While challenges exist, the benefits of resource sharing and networking outweigh the obstacles, positioning these practices as essential components of modern library services. As the information landscape continues to evolve, it is crucial for libraries to

embrace collaborative approaches and establish robust resource-sharing networks to remain relevant and responsive to the diverse needs of their user communities.

2. The History and Evolution of Resource Sharing and Networking in Nigeria

Resource sharing and networking have been integral components of the Nigerian library system since its inception, evolving over time to meet the burgeoning information needs of users. The genesis of resource sharing in Nigeria can be traced back to the colonial era when the establishment of regional library boards facilitated the exchange of materials among libraries within their respective regions.

In the post-independence era, the drive for resource sharing intensified as libraries grappled with limited funds and exponential growth in publishing outputs. The formation of the National Library of Nigeria in 1964 marked a significant milestone, as it coordinated resource sharing initiatives among public libraries nationwide. Concurrently, the emergence of academic library consortia, such as the Committee of University Librarians of Nigerian Universities (CULNU) in 1967, fostered cooperation and resource sharing among tertiary institutions.

The 1970s witnessed a paradigm shift with the advent of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Nigerian libraries embraced automation and digitization, paving the way for electronic resource sharing. The Nigerian Universities Network (NUNet) project, launched in 1994, interconnected federal university libraries, enabling them to access shared electronic resources and databases.

The turn of the millennium ushered in a new era of resource sharing facilitated by the internet and web-based technologies. The Nigerian University Libraries Consortium (NULIB) was established in 2000, providing a platform for cooperative acquisition of electronic resources and

shared access to online databases. Additionally, the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) played a pivotal role in promoting resource sharing through its annual conferences and publications.

The 21st century has seen a proliferation of resource sharing initiatives, such as the Nigerian Virtual Library Project (NVLP) and the Regional Information Network for Drug Demand Reduction (RINDR), facilitating access to diverse information resources. The adoption of integrated library management systems (ILMS) and web-based platforms has further streamlined resource sharing processes, enabling libraries to share bibliographic data, holdings information, and interlibrary loan services seamlessly.

The rise of institutional repositories and open access initiatives has revolutionized resource sharing in Nigeria. Institutions like the University of Lagos and Covenant University have established repositories, making their scholarly outputs freely accessible to researchers worldwide. Simultaneously, the Nigerian Research and Education Network (NgREN) has fostered collaboration among academic and research institutions, facilitating resource sharing and knowledge exchange.

Despite these advancements, challenges persist, including inadequate funding, limited ICT infrastructure, and the need for standardized policies and protocols. Nonetheless, Nigerian libraries remain committed to embracing innovative technologies and collaborative strategies to enhance resource sharing and networking, ensuring equitable access to information for all users.

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